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THE ETHAN ALLEN REPORT:

THE STATUS AND FUTURE OF THE AMERICAN FAMILY

Commissioned by Ethan Allen, Inc.

The Company that Puts the Family First!

Conducted by Research & Forecasts, Inc.

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PREFACE

By
Nathan S. Ancell
Chairman, Ethan Allen, Inc.

Since its inception, Ethan Allen has been deeply involved in the American home environment as a stage setting for activities which can improve the quality of family life.

Warm and inviting home environments can have many benefits for families and can have a major impact on the social problems and issues that confront our nation. They can encourage our children to invite friends to their home and share their personal and family experiences, and can help keep young people off the streets and away from the serious social ills of today.

Relationships among family members can be influenced by quality home environments. Problems such as broken homes, crime and violence can be helped and relieved. Futhermore, encouraging consumers to improve their homes can substantially improve the American economy. Roughly 60% of all American production is based on products used in and for homes.

Understanding and improving family life can also address the mental and physical wellbeing of the nation and reduce health care costs and medical expenditures for our population.

At Ethan Allen we feel strongly motivated to put the family first and to project this commitment to the nation. Uplifting the quality of family life is one of our principal objectives. We want our people who work in manufacturing, corporate headquarters, and galleries to feel that the quality, design and correlation of our products enables us to make a contribution to the economic and social life of the country.

The new insights into family life in America today presented in this Ethan Allen study is one way of demonstrating our commitment to family values. We hope this study on the American family will be considered an important contribution by Ethan Allen to the American public.

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OVERVIEW

The Ethan Allen Report: The Status and Future of the American Family, based on 2,000 in-depth telephone interviews, reveals some startling information on the changes that have occurred in family norms, as well as on the directions in which the family may be heading over the next generation. This study shows that the family is indeed in a state of flux, and that attitudes toward parental obligations and toward accepted family modes have undergone radical change over the last decade or so.

There is much discussion these days on the disintegration of the American family--divorce rates, broken homes, battered children, etc. These, for the most part, refer to the drastic changes in family structure and the resulting consequences. This has been a traumatic social experience for our society. In light of these, the Ethan Allen study was directed at finding out what has happened to family values during this period of rapid restructuring. And the study has made what appears to be a new and important discovery--that the values have remained strong despite the changes. This does not minimize the problems which are constantly in the news, but it does reveal an inner strength that will prove to be of vital importance as changes continue to occur in the structure of the American family.

The fundamental shifts in family structural norms and roles have not changed the essential fact that family continues to have great purpose and import for large majorities of people, nor have they led to the disintegration of the family unit, as many

popular commentators fear. In fact, one of the most striking findings of this study is that Americans overwhelmingly affirm the family's importance in their life. And this affirmation is not just in theory, but is carried out in practice by a large portion of the public.

Not only do nine in ten (89%) people describe their family as one of the most important elements in their life, but a similarly high number (83%) consider spending time with their family a very important priority. And, despite the busy pace of contemporary life, large majorities take time to engage in activities with their family, choosing to spend most of their leisure time with family members. With the current rise in dual-career families, one might expect daily family meals to have become a tradition of the past. But contrary to these expectations, more than four out of five (86%) surveyed families still share a meal together every day.

Contemporary society is a highly mobile one, yet a large number of Americans have managed to maintain close bonds with their parents and other non-household family members. Seven in ten (71%) Americans with at least one living parent live reasonably close to their parents, and more than four in ten (44%) speak to their parents more frequently than once a week. For many people, family visits encompass more than holiday meals or special family occasions. Half (51%) of the public visit their family whenever

they can, for no other reason than to see them, and for the vast majority, visits to family members do not originate out of a sense of obligation, but because people enjoy spending time with their family.

Factors Determining Family Closeness

In compiling this study, we examined in depth the differences between dual-career families, single-parent families, and the "traditional" family which has a homemaker mother caring for children at home and which is quickly encompassing smaller and smaller segments of the population. The analysis was undertaken with the expectation of finding significant differences in attitudes toward the family and in actual family practice. But in fact one of the main findings of this study has been a notable lack of significant differences due to one's family structure. Although there are obvious examples of ways in which these families function differently (i.e., parents in dual-career families are more stressed by a lack of time together), working mothers, single mothers, and more traditional homemaker mothers are more similar than dissimilar. In most cases, it is not the work or marital status that makes the difference, it is the individual's family orientation.

The vital importance of an individual's inherent orientation in determining attitudes toward family and family practice is another crucial finding of this study. A family-focused

individual, referred to as one having a **Dominant Family Orientation** in this study, consistently places great value and emphasis on strong family unity. An individual more focused on personal needs or on factors external to the family (identified as having a **Subordinate Family Orientation** in the study) derives much less satisfaction from the family, and this is reflected in a wide range of ways. Since this index has not been used previous to this study, there is no measure to determine if more individuals today fall into the **Dominant** or **Subordinate Orientation** groups relative to the past. With the development of this index, however, a measure has been set for future reference so that upcoming trends can be tracked.

Altered Perceptions of Parenting

A major finding with both positive and negative implications is the discovery that parental roles and parent-child obligations are not what they were a few decades ago. On the positive side, there is now a far greater belief than ever before in the importance of the father's role in childrearing. Seventy percent (70%) of Americans strongly support the equal role of fathers in childrearing. This number had doubled in just a short time. A decade and a half ago, in 1970, less than half as many people (33%) agreed that both sexes have the responsibility to care for small children.

Majorities today also support the right of parents to pursue their own interests and lives, and the right of children to have different views from their parents. These attitudes suggest a far greater freedom than existed in earlier versions of the family.

On the negative side, however, the public expresses ambivalence over the notion of sacrificing for their children. Only a third (35%) of the survey sample strongly support the notion of sacrificing in order to give their children the best.* This represents a radical shift in thinking and may be one of the most far-reaching changes experienced by the family unit today.

Other findings in this study confirm this newfound independence within the family unit. Only a minority of parents have made career sacrifices for the sake of spending time with their family, and only a minority say they would make such sacrifices.

Today's family must fend for itself in many ways. Few families with children have received much assistance from their parents with regard to child care, financial assistance, or in starting a career. And only a minority (30%) feel it necessary to perpetuate a tradition of grown children living in close proximity to their parents.

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* A Lou Harris study conducted for General Mills in 1980 showed that 69%of the public believe parents today do not seem as willing to sacrifice for their childen as parents did in the past.

Further Departures from Tradition

A further departure from traditional modes is seen in the attitude toward single people. According to a 1957 study conducted by Yankelovich, 80% of the public believed a woman who remained unmarried was either sick, neurotic, or immoral. But according to the new Ethan Allen Report: The Status and Future of the American Family, 68% indicate acceptance of the single lifestyle, and an approximately equal number agree that single adults can do a good job of raising children. In 1936, less than a third (29%) of Americans supported the notion of a small family (one with only two children). Today, over half (53%) favor small families.

Controversial Issues

Certain issues continue to evoke controversy among Americans. A decade ago, the public was nearly equally divided on the issue of abortion (52% favored it in 1973), and they remain so today (46% favor it).

People also continue to express ambivalent feelings about mothers with young children going to work. Three-quarters (74%) of the survey sample believe a mother with young children should not work unless the money is really needed. This finding is surprising in light of the increasing number of mothers in the workforce.

A majority of the public also remains generally opposed to homosexual marriage and the concept of homosexuals raising children.

The Strength of the Marital Relationship

It is heartening that amid all these changes, Americans have not wavered in their commitment to the ideal of marriage. Nearly two-thirds (62%) of the public disagree that divorce is a reasonable way to deal with marital problems, and young people are the most adamantly opposed to divorce. Seven in ten (70%) married adults claim to be very satisfied with their marriage, and 85% say it is unlikely they will face marital problems in the near future. Eight in ten (81%) support the concept of marriage, regardless of whether or not one wants children.

These attitudes are reflected in actual practice. Despite contemporary trends that encourage husbands and wives to lead their own separate lives, 81% of married couples spend most of their leisure time together. And few people (17%) carry the new independence to the extent of wanting a separate vacation from their spouse.

Americans Want Better Solutions for the Elderly

In seeking to determine the health of the American family, this study examined those family-related issues which cause deep concern to Americans today. Do people worry about the stability

of their marriage during a time of rampant divorce? Has the threat of alcohol or drug abuse entered their homes? Or has the strain of living in a high-pressured society weakened their relationship with their children? Survey findings reveal that these issues, given great visibility in the popular press, are not the main concerns of the public. One of the most pressing issues facing a majority of Americans is the problem of how to care for elderly family members, a problem essentially ignored by our society.

A major finding of this study is America's desire for better solutions to the problems of the elderly. Nearly two-thirds (62%) of the public do not approve of putting an elderly parent in a nursing home, and 88% want to see more special housing for the aged. Unfortunately, most people envision an intensification of the problems of the elderly in the future, with little relief in sight. Six in ten (59%) predict that over the next twenty years, elderly family members will be more and more isolated from other family members. Yet the public's unwillingness to accept this is evidenced by the large number (56%) who would like to counter this trend by being of more assistance to an elderly family member.

Looking Toward the Future

Americans' predictions for the future of the family are tempered by the trends which surround them. A note of realism intermingles

with their hopes and expectations. Few people expect to see a reversal of the trend toward greater independence within the family unit and greater variety in family form. In anticipating future possibilities, people expect to see a mix of the old and the new.

A large majority (78%) of Americans expect the future to bring more untraditional family units consisting of single parents, unmarried couples, couples without children, and couples of the same sex. However, a similarly large number (77%) express the view that, simultaneously, family units consisting of two parents and their children will increasingly grow in importance. A majority (60%) also believe that ties among non-household family members will become closer, indicating that bonds with parents and grown children will remain strong. And although a majority personally reject divorce as a solution to marital problems, three-quarters (76%) of the public predict that in the future most married people will be divorced at least once.

This study presents a mass of information on how the American family works, on the hopes and desires of Americans for their own family unit, and on what we can expect to see over the next generation. The theme that emerges throughout is the importance of the family in today's fluctuating society. Whatever form it may take, the family as a social unit providing physical, emotional, and spiritual sustenance will remain. Rather than

exemplifying a weakening of family ties, a majority of Americans continue to be an example of a family-oriented people, expressing the hope and conviction that family values will endure.

METHODOLOGICAL NOTE

The Ethan Allen Report: The Status and Future of the American Family is based on a series of 2,000 telephone interviews with a representative, random sample of the American adult public, conducted between September 24 and November 9, 1985. The results have been weighted to correspond as closely as possible to U.S. Census figures.

The data collection, analysis, and interpretation of this study were all carried out by Research & Forecasts, Inc., with the assistance of the panel of advisors listed at the front of the report. Responsibility for the accuracy of the study, and the interpretations of the findings contained in this report, rest entirely with Research & Forecasts.

Throughout the report, in both tables and graphs and within the body of the text, frequency responses to particular questions are presented in percentage form. In some cases these are "relative frequencies" which include the category of "Don't know/No answer" as a legitimate response. In others, however, these are "adjusted frequencies" which exclude those who did not or could not answer. In general, "adjusted frequences" are presented especially in questions of a factual nature. In questions of pure opinion, on the other hand, "relative frequencies" have been used.

The sample size, given in each table or graph as the "number of respondents," varies for a number of reasons. While many questions were addressed to the full (2,000) sample, others were

asked only of a particular sub-sample, such as those with children, or with living parents, or those not living alone, or some other limiting category. In addition, when "adjusted frequencies" are presented, those who did not respond are deleted from the total number of respondents.

In most cases the sum of the frequency responses will be 100%, although it may occasionally differ by several percentage points due to the cumulative effect of rounding off. Some questions allowed more than one response, however, and in these cases the total percentage will exceed 100%.

The report also includes a large number of cross-tabulations. In most cases these are individual frequency responses (always "adjusted frequencies") run by another variable, usually a demographic factor such as age, income, or race, or one of the indices created in this study. All cross-tabulations shown are statistically significant. The number of respondents for these tables represent all those who answered both questions.

A detailed methodology, and a copy of the questionnaire used for the study can be found at the back of this report.

INTRODUCTION

Ten years ago social scientists, psychologists, and many other observers of the national scene expressed alarm over the "crisis" engulfing the American family. Pointing to sweeping demographic changes and the findings of numerous studies, they predicted that the fabric of the family was in the process of being rent apart by both internal and external forces. Among the evidence cited at the time was the rise in divorce rates, in children born out of wedlock, in unmarried couples, and the widening "generation gap." Other factors which were expected to further weaken family ties were the increasing number of working women in general and working mothers in particular, single-parent and dual-career households, and a growing "me" orientation among the more affluent members of the post-war baby boom. Finally, a host of social ills, from juvenile delinquency and violent crime to urban unrest, political protest, and declining productivity, were attributed, more by popular commentators than academic experts, to a decline in family values and family life.

Now, a decade later, have these dire predictions come true? Is the American family really in disarray? Have the bonds that held families together for generations been loosened or cut? Has the quality of family life declined to the point where it no longer offers the basic satisfactions and comforts that are associated with the very sense of family? Have the traditional roles performed by the family been diminished and transferred elsewhere? And finally, has the very <u>value</u> of the family institution been

cheapened in contemporary thinking?

The Scope of the Study

The study which forms the basis for the Ethan Allen Report: The Status and Future of the American Family set out to answer all these questions, and in so doing, to determine the present condition of the American family and say something about its future. Those responsible for this study recognized from its inception that "the family" covered many different groupings of people related by blood and marriage, and these groupings often changed as people moved through their own life cycles. It was therefore decided not to focus on the so-called nuclear family alone, or even just the members of the family household, but to look at the full range of membership and relationships that mean "family" to the American people. At the same time, a basic distinction between the family members of a person's household, and those family members he or she does not live with, was made.

In order to determine the state of the family today, the following critical questions had to be answered:

- How involved are people in family life today, and how can we measure this involvement?
- How satisfied are Americans with their various familial relationships, and how does this compare with their satisfaction with other aspects of their lives?
- How important is the family in the lives of Americans today, and how do they perceive the family as a force in society at large?

- How critical is the amount of time spent with the family, as opposed to the way in which it is spent?
- What limits do people place on their commitment to or involvement with their family?
- What are the most prevalent sources of conflict within families today?
- Whom do Americans turn to when faced with a family problem?
- How do Americans see the future of the American family?

Surrounding all these questions lies an even larger one:

> What accounts for the differences in personal involvement in family life and commitment to the family reported by different people? Are they the result of differences in family structure, or are they determined by other factors?

The answers to these questions constitute the basis for the Ethan Allen Report: The Status and Future of the American Family.

Report Structure

The research essentially confirms what demographers have been telling us for years--that the basic family unit has undergone significant transition since the end of World War II. The traditional nuclear family, consisting of two parents (one working, the other a full-time housewife) and their children, is the exception today, vying with other arrangements, including two-career households, single-family households, and married couples with no children, not to mention single, divorced, and widowed individuals living alone. Family form has, indeed, become more flexible, with more models available for both sexes. The

study also shows that the American people have come to accept--if not necessarily approve of--the existence and even the inevitability of many of these "untraditional" forms.

Part Two of this report reveals that despite the fluid sense of structure (in terms of membership) and function (especially in terms of traditional sexual roles), **family bonds have retained their inherent strength.** Family--however defined--continues to play an enormously vital role in the lives of most Americans, while relationships with family members continue to provide tremendous satisfaction. Essentially, individuals continue to invest much of their emotional involvement in their family unit, and derive much of their pleasure from family experiences.

But commitment to family does have its limits. People recognize the possibility, at least, that the demands of family life could intrude on an individual's own needs, and many homes have instinctively provided for all members of the household to have their own personal space. Parents also place limits on the amount of assistance they provide their own grown children.

Nor are American families free from conflict. Part Three deals with the many problems and conflicts--current and anticipated--facing Americans within their own household and with other, non-resident family members. And it shows that the greatest source

of family conflict does not arise from external circumstances, but from the dynamics of family relationships themselves. This part also shows the means Americans choose to cope with these pressures.

Part Four looks at the many ways the family as an institution continues to receive high marks from the American people, and shows that the concept of family as a unique positive force in society at large is thriving rather than dying. It also shows that the family remains the major repository for their hopes for the future.

Yet one overriding question still remains--what are the major determinants of family behavior and attitudes which account for the vast differences among individuals and family units? Are they simply a reflection of the greater diversity in family structure today, or do they have deeper roots? This is the subject of the first part of The Ethan Allen Report: The Status and Future of the American Family.

PART ONE:

DEVELOPING NEW PERSPECTIVES ON

THE AMERICAN FAMILY

CHAPTER ONE: THE FAMILY IN FLUX

The Dynamics of Change

No one doubts that family structure today is changing. A rising divorce rate and the increasing number of working mothers are just two of the most notable sociological changes affecting the family today. In 1950, for example, less than one in five marriages ended in divorce. By 1980 there was one divorce for every two marriages.[1]

Statistics show that the decade of the 1970s was a crucial time. According to the Bureau of the Census, only 2.1% of the total population in 1950 was divorced. By 1965, the number had risen only slightly, to 2.9%, but in 1982, 7% of the population was divorced.

One result has been the increase in female-headed families. During the last decade alone the number of children living in one-parent families increased by 60%.[2] In 1970, 10.2% of all families with children were female-headed households. By 1982, that number had nearly doubled to 18.9%.

The number of women in the work force also shows a marked

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1 Bob Maynard, Gannett News Services, January 27, 1986, p. 8.
2 Arlene S. and Jerome H. Skolnick, Family in Transition, p. 575.

increase over the last decade. In 1970, 42.7% of all married women between the ages of 25 and 44 were working. In 1982, 62.6% of married women in this age group were working.[3] Another indication of changing households is the rise in the number of Americans living with people outside of their family. The number of nonfamily households has markedly increased from roughly 5 million in 1950 to over 22 million today.

Reports on these radical shifts have long since ceased to be the exclusive concern of demographers and urban planners and have become matters of interest and concern to the general reading public, and new statistics are often featured as front-page news. The impact of these changes on parental roles, eating and shopping patterns, and even corporate culture, among many other things, has also been studied and widely discussed, while the public policy implications have entered a new era of public debate.

Less clear, however, is the impact of these structural changes on the actual fabric of the family itself. Despite many claims to the contrary, there has not been proof that the family as a living institution is in decline, or is any weaker today than a generation ago. Nor is there any substantive indication that people place less value on their own family relationships, or on

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3 Bureau of Census, Statistical Abstract of the United States, p. 412

the role of the family within society at large, than they once did.

An Unproven Link

Much of the public outcry on the perceived crisis in the American family is based on two unproven suppositions:

1) That change in family structure, especially the rise in households other than those consisting of two parents with children and the increased flexibility of male and female roles, is a definite indication of a decline in the family;

2) That this change is responsible for many of the problems experienced within the contemporary family and even within society itself.

Buried within the first supposition is also an assumption that the two-parent nuclear family is somehow the only well-established "traditional" norm, from which recent departures constitute an aberration. Historically, however, this is inaccurate. In fact, there has always been considerable variation in family structure. Single-parent families, three-generational families, the commune, and the "nuclear family" have long existed side by side.

In their book Family in Transition, Arlene and Jerome Skolnick argue that family conditions have been evolving for centuries in response to changing sociological and economic circumstances. Today, in America, there are fewer three-generational families

and more single-parent families than perhaps at any time in the past. And the ideal of the American "traditional" family consisting of a working father, housewife mother, and one or more children, was only really enshrined in the first half of the twentieth century. Today, that is also disappearing. Only 45% of all American families now correspond to the nuclear family model of a father, mother, and their own children,[4] and out of the 83.5 million U.S. households, only 5.7% consist of a working father, a homemaker mother, and two or more children.[5] Yet the myth persists that this is the dominant household type.

Clearly, the structure of the American family is not what it was 30 years ago, and granted, there are far more single-parent and dual-career families today than ever before, but how do these families really differ from the two-parent model? Do the differences merely apply to superficial patterns of daily routines, or do they extend to more fundamental aspects such as basic commitment to and involvement in family life? This is one of the key questions explored in this report.

In order to determine the impact of family structure (e.g., membership and roles) members of families including children at home were divided into three categories, depending on the type and number of parents and wage earners:

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4 Skolnick, Family in Transition, p. 575.
5 The World, January 19, 1986.

- **Traditional**--Consisting of a working father, homemaker (or part-time employed) mother, and children at home: (19% of our sample)
- **Dual-career families**--Both parents work full-time, with children at home: (14%)
- **Single-parent households**--One parent with children at home: (7%)

When the responses of these three groups to each of the questions asked in the questionnaire were compared, however, surprisingly few truly significant differences emerged. Members of traditional families, dual-career families, and single-parent families were found to be strikingly similar in terms of their basic attitudes toward family life and family values. For example, members of all three types appeared equally confident about the way they are raising their children, and equally likely to believe in the importance of fathers spending as much time with their children as mothers do.

Where differences did emerge, they generally deal with practical matters, such as lack of sufficient time to spend together. And in most cases other factors play a far greater role. (Wherever significant differences do apply, they are mentioned in the text.)

In other words, **family structure was proven not to be the key determinant in most of the fundamental aspects of family life and family values.**

What, then, does determine the level of family involvement, internal conflict, and the basic attitudes toward family matters which different people hold? If they are not a result of structure, are they simply a function of age, gender, education, economic position, or some other demographic factors? Or are they the result of deeper, more complex factors that have yet to be identified?

CHAPTER TWO: THE IMPACT OF HOUSEHOLD FAMILY ORIENTATION

Intensive analysis of the results of the survey reveal that **Household Family Orientation** and **Family Satisfaction** are the two most powerful forces shaping an individual's day-to-day involvement in family activities and the likelihood of his family suffering from a wide range of problems and conflicts. **Family Satisfaction** is also a key determinant for many basic attitudes toward family-related issues. A separate chapter is devoted to each of these forces.

Orientation as an Indication of Involvement

Involvement in family life is a very difficult thing to measure. It implies far more than an abstract sense of obligation, or even a sincere commitment to the well-being of other family members. It is really what people want to know when they ask, "How close is your family?" Closeness is essentially a measure of individual involvement which goes beyond personal participation to embrace the very orientation of family members toward family life.

Until now, however, there has been no single, universally accepted measure for family orientation which could be linked to both behavior and experience. Part of the difficulty is that such anorientation cannot be objectively defined. Opinion may differ radically on what level of involvement in family life shows a strong or weak family orientation, and on what degree of

involvement is really desirable. All of these are essentially subjective questions on an individual level.

The results of this survey, however, show that family orientation can be measured as a product of three different factors, each of which is based on a highly subjective evaluation. These factors are:

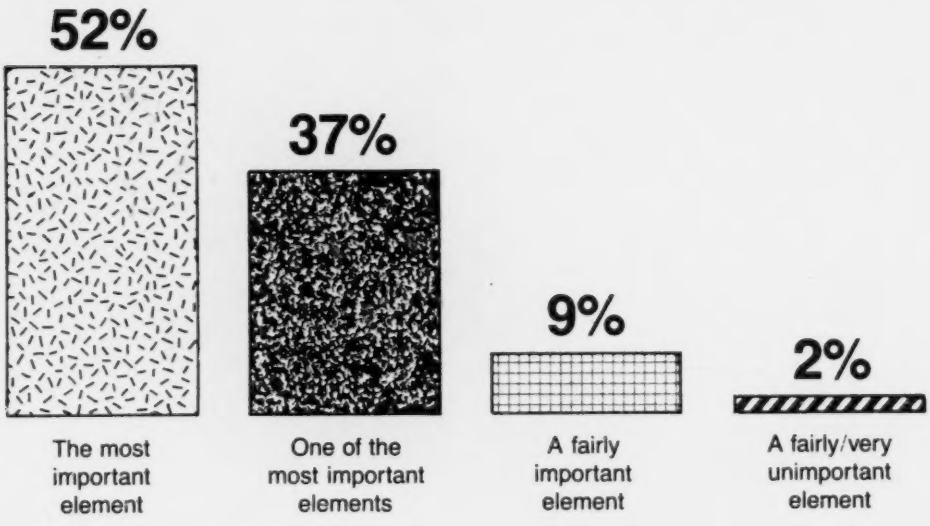
- The relative importance of family (in general) compared to other elements of one's life
- How close a person considers his or her own household family to be
- The importance of spending time with other household family members

Each of these three key factors deserves consideration before returning to their cumulative impact on an individual's family orientation.

The Three Bases of Household Family Orientation

How important is family in the lives of Americans today, and where does it stand in the hierarchy of personal loyalties? Half of (52%) the respondents surveyed consider their family the most important aspect of their lives, and an additional 37% describe it as one of the most important aspects. Only 11% assign it a lesser role. (See Table 2.1.)

TABLE 2.1: Which of the following statements best describes how important your family is to you?



Number of respondents (1881)

From one perspective, this would appear to reflect an overwhelming endorsement of the central importance of the family in contemporary life. On the other hand, it also indicates that nearly half the population (48%) does not assign the family unquestioned primacy over all other aspects of their lives.

Age, marital status, education, and gender all affect the importance of family in one's life. The importance of family increases as people grow older, with people over 50 being **significantly more inclined** than others to feel that family is **the most important** element in their life. (See Table 2.2.)

Married people are also significantly more inclined than separated or single people to assign family a role of supreme importance. Women and people with little formal education are similarly inclined to rate the value of family higher than men or those with more education. But family structure accounts for only a slight difference. Traditional families are only marginally more inclined than dual-career or single-parent families to feel their family is the most important element in their life.

TABLE 2.2: THE IMPORTANCE OF HOUSEHOLD FAMILY LIFE

	The Most Important Element %	One of the Most Important Elements %	A Fairly Important Element %	A Fairly/Very Unimportant Element %	Number of Respondents
BY AGE					
18 to 24	37	45	15	3	(311)
25 to 34	47	42	9	1	(474)
35 to 49	52	38	8	2	(455)
50 to 64	64	27	8	1	(357)
65 and over	61	31	7	1	(276)
BY MARITAL STATUS					
Married	59	35	6	1	(1162)
Separated/Divorced	43	42	14	1	(149)
Single	29	49	19	4	(398)
Widowed	67	22	7	4	(169)

	The Most Important Element %	One of the Most Important Elements %	A Fairly Important Element %	A Fairly/Very Unimportant Element %	Number of Respondents
BY HOUSEHOLD STRUCTURE					
Dual-career with children	57	35	6	1	(260)
Single parent with children	54	39	6	1	(124)
Traditional family	64	33	2	1	(343)
BY GENDER					
Male	49	35	14	2	(902)
Female	55	39	5	1	(976)
BY EDUCATION					
8th grade or less	70	25	3	2	(216)
Some high school	56	31	10	3	(268)
High school graduate	51	39	9	1	(738)
Some college	48	41	10	1	(330)
College graduate	45	41	13	2	(319)

A large majority of Americans also claim their household family is very close. Eight out of ten (79%) Americans living with other family members perceive their family unit to be very close, and one in five (20%) perceive it to be moderately close. (See Table 2.3.)

TABLE 2.3: How close do you consider your household family to be?

	%
Very close	79
Moderately close	20
Not close	2
Number of respondents	(1624)

Interestingly, the sense of family closeness is not affected by most demographic factors. Men and women, rich and poor, blacks and whites, liberals and conservatives, and the better and less educated show few differences when it comes to the degree of closeness they experience at home. The only distinctions worth noting are those relating to marital status, family structure, and age. (See Table 2.4.)

TABLE 2.4: FAMILY CLOSENESS

	Very Close %	Moderately Close %	Not Close %	Number of Respondents
BY MARITAL STATUS				
Married	81	18	1	(1191)
Separated/Divorced	86	15	0	(89)
Single	68	28	4	(282)
Widowed	74	26	0	(61)
BY AGE				
18 to 24	74	22	5	(286)
25 to 34	82	17	1	(425)
35 to 49	74	26	1	(414)
50 to 64	79	19	3	(303)
65 and over	90	10	0	(187)
BY FAMILY STRUCTURE				
Dual-career with children	74	25	1	(265)
Single parent with children	76	24	0	(139)
Traditional family	82	16	1	(354)

As might be expected, single and widowed respondents are the least likely to report a very close household. But separated and

divorced respondents are even slightly more likely than those who are currently married to say their household family is very close. This startling result indicates that divorce in and of itself does not necessarily destroy the strength of the family bond connecting those remaining in the household.

Another somewhat unexpected finding is that members of traditional families are only slightly more likely than single parents or dual-career parents to consider their families very close. This, too, argues against the notion that the traditional family is the only true repository of a close family environment.

Finally, age appears to raise the perception of family closeness at two distinct times of life--among those 25 to 34 (those most likely to have young children) and 65 and over.

Not only is the family perceived as important, and family life as close by a large majority of people, but spending time with household family members is also perceived as critical. Four out of five (84%) people who live with family say that spending time together is very important, and 14% say it is moderately important. (See Table 2.5.)

TABLE 2.5: How important to you is spending time with family members you live with?

	%
Very important	84
Moderately important	14
Not very important	2
Number of respondents	(1620)

Not unexpectedly, people under 25 years old are somewhat less inclined than others to feel it is very important to spend time with their household family. This may be due to the fact that fewer of these people are married or have children. They are also the most likely to still be living with a parent, and so spending time with household family takes on a different perspective. But after this age there is practically no change in attitude toward the importance of spending time together. (See Table 2.6.)

People who describe themselves as religious or spiritual are also more inclined than those who do not do so to feel that spending time with the family is very important.

Family structure, on the other hand, has no bearing on this issue. Dual-career parents, single parents, and traditional family parents agree equally on the importance of spending time together as a family.

TABLE 2.6: IMPORTANCE OF SPENDING TIME WITH HOUSEHOLD FAMILY MEMBERS

BY AGE

	18 to 24 %	25 to 34 %	35 to 49 %	50 to 64 %	65 and Over %
Very important	66	86	87	89	92
Moderately important	29	12	12	11	7
Not very important	5	2	1	0	1
Number of respondents	(286)	(424)	(414)	(302)	(185)

BY STRONG RELIGIOUS CONVICTION

	Yes %	No %
Very important	89	72
Moderately important	10	25
Not very important	1	3
Number of respondents	(1176)	(419)

These three questions are all strongly related to each other, indicating that people who value the family in general also value spending time with the family members they live with, and consider theirs a close family. For example, about eight in ten of those who consider family the most important or one of the most important aspects of their lives call their household very close, compared to only six in ten of those who value family less. (See Table 2.7.)

TABLE 2.7: RELATIONSHIP AMONG THE THREE BASES OF THE HOUSEHOLD FAMILY ORIENTATION INDEX

HOUSEHOLD FAMILY CLOSENESS BY IMPORTANCE OF FAMILY

	Most Important %	One of Most Important %	Fairly Important %	Not Important %
Very close	83	79	57	58
Moderately close	16	20	37	30
Not close	1	2	6	12
Number of respondents	(845)	(569)	(122)	(25)

HOUSEHOLD FAMILY CLOSENESS BY IMPORTANCE OF TIME SPENT WITH FAMILY

	Very Important %	Moderately Important %	Not Important %
Very close	84	56	20
Moderately close	15	42	44
Not close	1	2	36
Number of respondents	(1364)	(238)	(25)

IMPORTANCE OF TIME SPENT WITH FAMILY BY IMPORTANCE OF FAMILY

	Most Important %	One of Most Important %	Fairly Important %	Not Important %
Very important	90	82	59	53
Moderately important	9	17	33	31
Not very important	1	0	8	16
Number of respondents	(844)	(568)	(120)	(25)

The Household Family Orientation Index

Linking these three questions together enables us to create an entirely new **Index of Household Family Orientation**, which indicates just how strongly an individual's life is geared toward his or her own family. In fact, the entire population (except for those living alone) can be divided into three mutually-exclusive groups by the strength of their family orientation:

- Those with a **Dominant Family Orientation**, comprising 42% of the adult population, are people whose lives revolve around their household families. To these people family tends to be the most important aspect of their lives. Spending time with other family members is very important to them, and they consider their household families very close. Family concerns dominate their lives, so that their basic orientation then, is inward, toward the family.

- Those with a **Positive Family Orientation** (34% of the population) are also strongly committed to their household unit, but to a slightly less degree than those with a **Dominant Family Orientation**. Their orientation is sometimes pointed more closely toward the family, sometimes more closely away from the household, depending on the individual question.

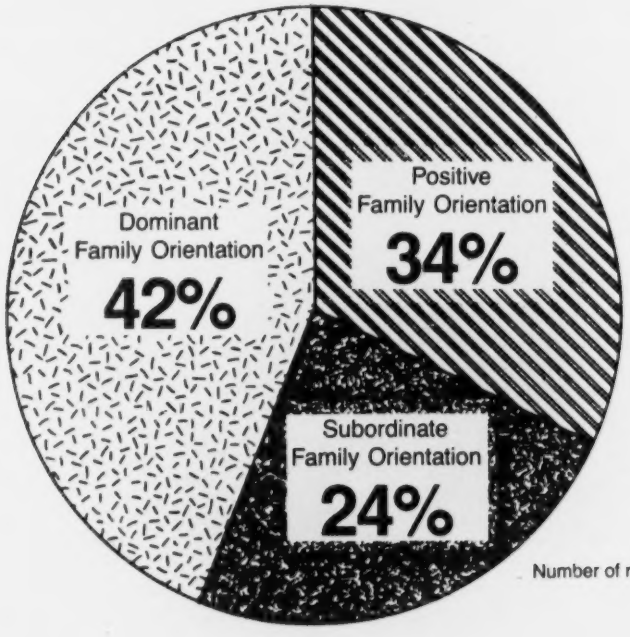
- Those with a **Subordinate Family Orientation** (24% of the population) present, in many ways, an opposite picture. These are people for whom family lacks the primacy accorded it by those with a strong family orientation, and they regard their household families as less close-knit. In general, they appear to show greater detachment from family life, and their views on family matters tend to be less optimistic. Not surprisingly, they also are more likely to complain of a number of family conflicts. Their basic orientation, then, is away from the family center.

Combining the first two groups reveals that three-quarters (76%) of American adults not living alone have a strong family

orientation, far greater than many commentators on the American family have supposed. (See Table 2.8.) The validity of this index is substantiated by the fact that it serves as a barometer for a broad range of family-related experiences. In fact, as will be demonstrated throughout this report, membership in one of these three types is often a far stronger indicator of an individual's attitude and behavior than family structure, age, sex, or other demographic factors.

TABLE 2.8: DIVISION OF ADULT POPULATION, NOT LIVING ALONE,

BY HOUSEHOLD FAMILY ORIENTATION INDEX



Number of respondents (1578)

Demographic Profile

Age, marital status, employment status, political affiliation, marital status, and to some extent family structure, gender, and education do, however, exert some impact on Family Orientation:

- Age--Those over 49 are the most likely to be have a Dominant Family Orientation, while those 18-24 are most likely to have a Subordinate Orientation.
- Employment Status--Homemakers and retired persons are the most likely to have a Dominant Orientation.
- Politics--Conservatives are far more likely to have a Dominant Orientation than liberals.
- Marital Status--Married persons and those widowed are the most family-oriented, while singles are the least so.
- Structure--Traditional family members are more likely to have a Dominant Orientation than dual-career couples and single parents.
- Gender--Males are more likely than females to have a Subordinate Orientation.
- Education--Those with an eighth grade education or less are more likely than those who have attained more education to have a Dominant Orientation. (See Table 2.9.)

TABLE 2.9: DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF HOUSEHOLD FAMILY ORIENTATION INDEX

	Dominant Family Orientation %	Positive Family Orientation %	Subordinate Family Orientation %	Number of Respondents
BY FAMILY STRUCTURE				
Dual-career	40	39	21	(260)
Single-parent	41	35	23	(124)
Traditional	52	35	14	(347)

The Impact of Household Family Orientation

	Dominant Family Orientation %	Positive Family Orientation %	Subordinate Family Orientation %	Number of Respondents
BY AGE				
18 to 24	29	31	40	(277)
25 to 34	40	39	21	(420)
35 to 49	41	37	23	(407)
50 to 64	54	25	21	(295)
65 and over	48	41	10	(173)
BY EMPLOYMENT STATUS				
Employed full-time	43	31	27	(202)
Employed part-time	23	41	36	(42)
In school	49	35	16	(189)
Retired	41	30	30	(111)
Unemployed	54	32	13	(185)
BY POLITICAL AFFILIATION				
Conservative	48	33	19	(572)
Moderate	41	37	23	(561)
Liberal	34	33	34	(246)
None	38	36	27	(188)
BY GENDER				
Male	39	34	29	(746)
Female	45	36	19	(829)

	Dominant Family Orientation %	Positive Family Orientation %	Subordinate Family Orientation %	Number of Respondents
BY EDUCATION				
8th grade or less	56	36	8	(157)
Some high school	44	25	31	(242)
High school graduate	39	37	24	(646)
Some college	40	38	22	(270)
College graduate	43	32	25	(255)

Profile of Dominant Family Orientation

As stated above, those with a **Dominant Family Orientation** are people whose lives revolve around their household families. How does this orientation translate into the daily rhythms of family life? For one thing, members of this group make time for their families. Almost all live in households which eat at least one meal together every day, when family members tend to share their ideas and experiences. Large majorities also consider evenings and weekends as family times, and nearly half frequently join their whole household watching television programs or movies on a VCR. (Facts relating to the various family orientations are presented here to create a composite profile of each. For a full discussion of these findings and the relevant tables, see Part Two.)

A large majority of those with a **Dominant Family Orientation** who are parents of young children are very confident about the way they are raising their children. And those with grown children tend to keep in touch with them frequently, and usually live relatively close to their grown children. (See Part Two.)

This is just one of the ways in which members of this group demonstrate that their orientation toward the family extends beyond the immediate household. Another example is that those with living parents also tend to speak with or visit them often. In fact, as a group, those with a **Dominant Family Orientation** feel particularly strongly that grown children should never place an elderly parent in a nursing home as long as they are physically able to manage on their own. (See Parts Two and Four.)

Other indications of the strong orientation toward non-household family is a greater likelihood of attending family reunions and more spontaneous gatherings of family members, and the lower incidence of circumstances preventing them from attending such functions. Very few of those with a **Dominant Family Orientation** for example, report that lack of interest, old grievances and grudges, or a disagreement over some issue ever interferes with their participation in such family affairs. (See Parts Two and Three.)

The families of those with a **Dominant Family Orientation** also appear to function more smoothly than others. They are far less likely to suffer conflicts as a result of personality differences among family members. They are also less likely to experience family conflict over such issues as money, lack of privacy, and housework. All of this suggests that these families are far better equipped to cope with both the emotional and more mundane aspects of living together to prevent possible sources of friction from becoming conflicts. (See Part Three.)

The inherent strengths indicated by the family-oriented behavior of those with a **Dominant Family Orientation** and the smoother, less stress-filled functioning of their households appears to be based not merely on pragmatic grounds but on a solid foundation of belief in the value of the family as an institution and the consequent obligations toward that institution. Those with a **Dominant Family Orientation** are particularly likely to agree that a family is a place where people can learn how to relate to the rest of society, and that it is a place where most basic values are instilled. And a large majority of them believe that parents should sacrifice in order to give their children their best. (See Part Four.)

A large majority of those with a **Dominant Family Orientation** also consider themselves religious or spiritual people, they are more likely to cite religious beliefs and institutions as having a positive effect on family life in general, and they are somewhat more likely to look to the strengthening of religious ties as a way of bettering their own family life. (See Table 2.10, and Parts Two and Four.)

TABLE 2.10: STRONG RELIGIOUS CONVICTION

BY HOUSEHOLD FAMILY ORIENTATION

	Dominant %	Positive %	Subordinate %
Yes	80	78	58
No	20	22	42
Number of respondents	(658)	(536)	(362)

Their beliefs also display a flexibility that may explain, in part, the success of their households. Those with a **Dominant Family Orientation** are particularly likely to agree that a family is a group in which people are accepted for whom they are, and that a family is any group of people who consider themselves a family unit. (See Part Four.)

Demographically, this group tends to be over age 35, fairly well educated, with a conservative or moderate political orientation, and most are married.

Profile of Subordinate Family Orientation

Those with a **Subordinate Orientation** reveal their relative detachment from family in various ways. Those with children away from home or living parents tend to speak to them less frequently. Almost any time is less likely to be a family time for them, and only a third consider vacations to be family times. (See Part Two.)

Those with a **Subordinate Orientation** are the least likely to believe that parents should sacrifice in order to give their children the best. Interestingly, those who are parents with children at home are strikingly less confident about their childrearing than those with a **Dominant Orientation.** And those who are working are least likely to have made job sacrifices to be able to spend more time with their families. (See Part Two.)

The outward orientation of those with a **Subordinate Family Orientation** can also be seen in the fact that they are the most likely to see outside factors, such as job and media, exercising positive effects on the quality of family life.

As a group they tend to be younger and better educated than those with a **Dominant Orientation**, with a moderate or liberal political orientation. They are much less likely to be religiously or spiritually inclined than those with a **Dominant Family Orientation**, and a greater proportion are single.

Little will be said throughout the report about those with a **Positive Family Orientation** except that they represent a middle ground that appeals to a large proportion of Americans sensitive to both the rewards of close family life and the attractions of a wider world. They lack a coherent demographic profile and, wherever those with **Dominant** and **Positive Orientations** differ in viewpoint, behavior, or perception, they can usually be found somewhere in between.

CHAPTER THREE: THE IMPACT OF SATISFACTION

While **Orientation** measures an individual's involvement with and commitment to his family, **Satisfaction** with specific family relationships is a measure of the degree of overall personal **fulfillment** achieved in his or her family life. This type of **Satisfaction** also emerges as a strong determinant of attitudes toward all kinds of family issues, and the basis for a second index.

Satisfaction with Family Relationships

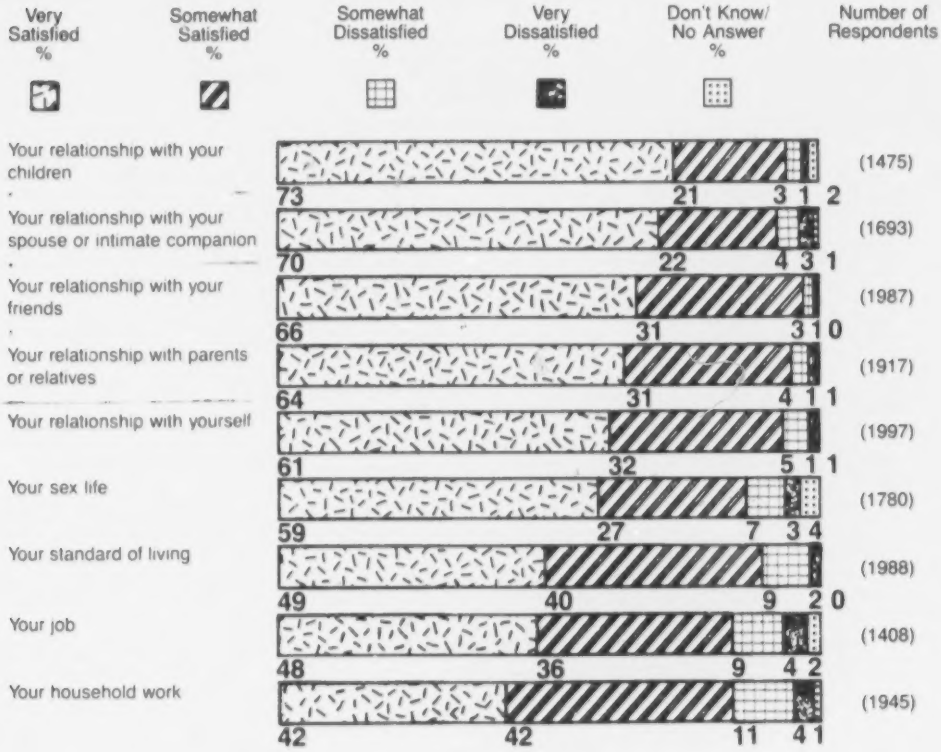
Just how satisfied are Americans with their personal relationships with their spouses, children, parents, and other relatives, and how do these levels of satisfaction compare to other aspects of their lives?

Americans today report greater satisfaction with their family life than with their job, their standard of living, or even themselves. The relationship between parents and children and between husbands and wives comprise the greatest sources of satisfaction for a large majority of family members.

When evaluating nine different aspects of their life, Americans express the highest level of satisfaction with their **relationship with their children.** Nearly three-quarters (73%) of American parents report they are very satisfied with their relationship

with their children.* (See Table 3.1.)

TABLE 3.1: In general, how satisfied are you with the following areas of your life?


Very Satisfied %
Somewhat Satisfied %
Somewhat Dissatisfied %
Very Dissatisfied %
Don't Know/ No Answer %
Number of Respondents
Your relationship with your children
73 21 3 1 2 (1475)
Your relationship with your spouse or intimate companion
70 22 4 3 1 (1693)
Your relationship with your friends
66 31 3 1 0 (1987)
Your relationship with parents or relatives
64 31 4 1 1 (1917)
Your relationship with yourself
61 32 5 1 1 (1997)
Your sex life
59 27 7 3 4 (1780)
Your standard of living
49 40 9 2 0 (1988)
Your job
48 36 9 4 2 (1408)
Your household work
42 42 11 4 1 (1945)

* Note: Percentages refer only to those to whom the relationship is applicable.

The marital relationship evokes similar enthusiasm. Seven in ten (70%) married people say they are very satisfied with their relationship with their spouse or intimate companion.

Two-thirds (66%) of the public say they are very satisfied with their friends, and nearly the same number (64%) say this of their relationship with their parents and relatives.

Majorities also express a high level of satisfaction with themselves (61%) and with their sex life (59%). Fewer say they are very satisfied with their standard of living (49%), their job (48%), or their household work (42%).

A Second Index

A second index was constructed around the degree of satisfaction with the following:

- Relationship with spouse
- Relationship with children
- Relationship with parents and other relatives
- Oneself
- Sex life

All these factors correlate very strongly with each other. In other words, those very satisfied with their spouse also tend to

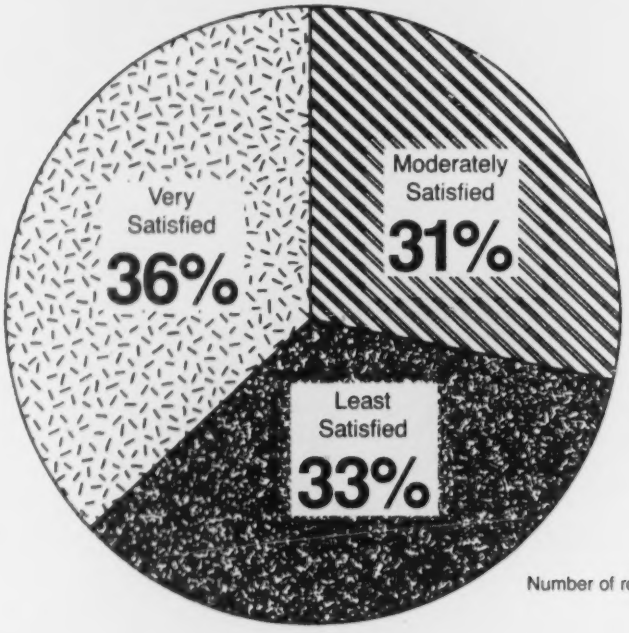
be very satisfied with their children and parents and other family and have high self-esteem. A satisfying sex life also appears to be a natural concomitant of these satisfying personal relationships.

Using this **Family Satisfaction Index**, the population of those having both spouses (or intimate companions) and children--a little over half the sample--was divided into three distinct groups of nearly equal size:

1) **Very Satisfied**, comprising 36% of this public
2) **Moderately Satisfied**, comprising 31%
3) **Least Satisfied**, comprising 33%

(See Table 3.2.)

TABLE 3.2: DIVISION OF MARRIED ADULT POPULATION WITH CHILDREN **BY FAMILY SATISFACTION INDEX**



Number of respondents (1140)

This index is an even stronger indicator for those to whom it applies than the **Household Family Orientation Index** for many present conflicts and future problems, as well as opinions and attitudes relating to family life.

Demographic Profile

Who is most likely to find the greatest fulfillment in their family relationships, and who finds the least? Surprisingly, most demographic indicators have little or no effect on the degree of **Satisfaction** people find. Men are just as likely as women to be **Very Satisfied**, as are whites and blacks, those with minimal eduation and those with advanced degrees, and those living in large cities and those in rural areas. And perhaps most telling of all, parents in dual-career and in traditional families show no differences when it comes to **Family Satisfaction**.

The following differences do emerge, however:

- Age--Age has practically no impact, except that those 65 and over are significantly more satisfied than younger people.
- Income--**Satisfaction** rises slowly with income.
- Employment--Retired people have the greatest **satisfaction**, the unemployed the least.
- Politics--Conservatives are far more likely than liberals to be **Very Satisfied**.
- Race--Blacks are the most likely to be **Least Satisfied**.

(See Table 3.3.)

TABLE 3.3: DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF FAMILY SATISFACTION INDEX

	Very Satisfied %	Moderately Satisfied %	Least Satisfied %	Number of Respondents
BY AGE				
18 to 24	34	35	30	(1140)
25 to 34	33	35	33	(79)
35 to 49	35	29	37	(329)
50 to 64	39	30	31	(254)
65 and over	49	27	25	(124)
BY INCOME				
$10,000 or less	28	33	38	(130)
$10,001 to $15,000	33	35	32	(130)
$15,001 to $20,000	38	30	33	(157)
$20,001 to $30,000	34	33	32	(258)
$30,001 to $40,000	39	33	29	(166)
More than $40,000	40	27	33	(207)
BY EMPLOYMENT STATUS				
Employed full-time	36	30	34	(625)
Employed part-time	37	33	30	(135)
In school	44	23	30	(10)
Retired	46	26	38	(130)
Unemployed	34	23	43	(78)
Homemaker	35	40	29	(158)

	Very Satisfied %	Moderately Satisfied %	Least Satisfied %	Number of Respondents
BY POLITICAL AFFILIATION				
Conservative	42	28	30	(439)
Moderate	35	33	32	(419)
Liberal	28	30	42	(159)
None	32	33	35	(116)
BY ETHNIC GROUP				
White	37	32	31	(947)
Black	38	22	40	(96)
Other	34	28	38	(93)

Focus on Conflict

Family Satisfaction--or the lack of it--is a particularly strong indicator for the presence of family conflict both present and anticipated. Those who are **Least Satisfied** are often 15-20% more likely to suffer from a wide battery of family problems caused by everything from money, employment, and housework to childrearing responsibilities. Even health-related problems are far more likely among those with the lowest degree of **Satisfaction** in their family life. Not surprisingly, those with the least **Satisfaction** are 27% more likely to report conflict caused by personality differences than those experiencing the most **Satisfaction.** (For a full discussion and tables, see Part Three.)

When it comes to anticipating future problems, those with the highest level of **Family Satisfaction** are far more likely to discount specific problems than those with the least **Satisfaction.** Marital problems, for example, are considered very unlikely by 81% of **Very Satisfied** people, as opposed to only 51% of **Least Satisfied** people. In fact, a full quarter of the latter group anticipate some kind of marital problems over the next five years and almost a third anticipate depression or loneliness. (For a full discussion and tables, see Part Three.)

Behavior and Outlook

Satisfaction also colors family behavior and attitudes toward family issues. Those with the lowest level of **Satisfaction** are far more likely to cite a whole list of factors which prevent them from attending family functions, from money and physical distance to conflict or disagreement over some issue. Not surprisingly, they are also the most likely group to spend most of their leisure time by themselves. (See Part Two.)

When it comes to matters of opinion, those with the highest degree of **Family Satisfaction** are the most likely to reject certain statements, such as that marriage is unnecessary unless there are children, that having children is too limiting, and that divorces are a reasonable way to deal with marital problems. They are also the most likely to anticipate that family units

consisting of two parents and their children will increasingly grow in importance. (See Part Four.)

The Linkage Between Satisfaction and Orientation

It would be logical to expect that to the people to whom they both apply, **Household Family Orientation** and **Family Satisfaction** are closely related to one another. One might even expect that those who are **Very Satisfied** with their family relationships are those with a **Dominant Family Orientation.** This turns out, however, not to be the case.

Orientation and **Satisfaction** are indeed related, but the linkage is not as strong as one might assume. A little better than half (54%) of **Very Satisfied** respondents are of a **Dominant Family Orientation**, compared to over a third (36%) of **Least Satisfied** respondents. (See Table 3.4.) This indicates that a strong **Family Orientation** can be found even among those with the lowest levels of **Satisfaction.** It also establishes that the two factors, while clearly linked, are in fact truly separate.

TABLE 3.4: HOUSEHOLD FAMILY ORIENTATION INDEX

BY FAMILY SATISFACTION INDEX

	Very Satisfied %	Moderately Satisfied %	Least Satisfied %
Dominant	54	47	36
Positive	35	37	36
Subordinate	11	16	20
Number of respondents	(385)	(329)	(345)

PART TWO:

FAMILY TIES--PERCEPTION AND REALITY

CHAPTER FOUR: SPENDING TIME WITH HOUSEHOLD FAMILY

Perhaps no commodity is considered as precious in today's harried environment as time. Time management, once the preserve of senior executives and professionals, seems to have become a national obsession. People simply don't seem to have enough time to do all the things they feel they must do, or want to do. And with the increase in two-career households, the focus in many households has shifted from relatively abundant family time to "quality time." Is the family being squeezed into busy routines, or, even worse, being squeezed out by more pressing demands? How do families actually spend the time they do have together? And how important is the time factor in shaping the contemporary family?

Since the commitment to spending time with the family is a basic component of **Family Orientation**, it would be logical to assume that those with **Dominant** and **Subordinate Family Orientations** would differ in terms of the ways they choose to spend their time. Similar differences might be expected between those with the greatest and those with the least amount of **Family Satisfaction.**

In many cases such differences do, indeed, emerge, relating to both qualitative and quantitative aspects of spending time with other members of their household.

Family Times

For those living in a household family, weekday evenings and weekends are the main times available for the family to be together. Three-quarters (74%) of these people consider evenings to be a time for the family, and two-thirds (65%) consider weekends to be a family time. (See Table 4.1.)

TABLE 4.1: Which of the following are usually considered family times in your household?

	%
Evenings	74
Dinner	44
Breakfast	24
Weekends	65
Holidays	53
Vacations	40
None	1
Other	1

Number of respondents (1617)

Mealtimes also emerge as family times in most households--in fact, 86% of those not living alone say they eat at least one meal together each day. (See Table 4.2.) And while almost all (92%) traditional families do so, sharing a meal is also the norm among most dual-career (82%) and single-parent (85%) households as well. (See Table 4.3.)

TABLE 4.2: Do you and your family share at least one meal together every day?

	%
Yes	86
No	14

Number of respondents (1638)

TABLE 4.3: Do you and your family share at least one meal together every day?

BY HOUSEHOLD STRUCTURE

	Dual-Career with Children %	Single-Parent with Children %	Traditional Family %
Yes	82	85	92
No	18	14	8
Number of respondents	(264)	(140)	(354)

But which meals are actually shared varies considerably, since less than half (44%) of those living with family say that dinner time is usually considered family time in their household, and one in four (24%) say this of breakfast. In general, traditional family members are the most likely to have a particular activity as a family time, but single-parent households are the most likely to consider breakfast a family time. (See Table 4.4.) On the other hand, unexpectedly small numbers of Americans treat

holidays and vacations, those unusually long blocks of free time, as family times. Only half (53%) of the public consider holidays a family time, and even less (40%) say this of vacations, suggesting definite limitations on the amount of time some people are willing to spend with their families when a wider range of choices are available. Strikingly, the differences here among the three types of household structures are minor.

TABLE 4.4: Which of the following are usually considered family times in your household?

	BY HOUSEHOLD STRUCTURE		
	Dual-Career with Children %	Single Parent with Children %	Traditional Family %
Evenings	74	72	82
Dinner	39	46	47
Breakfast	21	34	21
Weekends	66	62	74
Holidays	50	54	53
Vacations	41	36	43
Number of respondents	(265)	(138)	(354)

As predicted, **Family Household Orientation** does exert some impact on the likelihood of making these various times family times, most noticeably on holidays, and almost all (91%) family members with a **Dominant Family Orientation** share at least one meal

together each day. **Satisfaction** with key family relationships, on the other hand, has no impact on the amount of time spent with the family. (See Tables 4.5 and 4.6.)

TABLE 4.5: USUALLY CONSIDERED FAMILY TIMES

BY HOUSEHOLD FAMILY ORIENTATION INDEX

	Dominant %	Positive %	Subordinate %
Evenings	78	75	66
Dinner	45	45	37
Breakfast	27	25	17
Weekends	70	65	59
Holidays	56	57	43
Vacations	44	42	34
Number of respondents	(647)	(538)	(363)

TABLE 4.6: SHARING AT LEAST ONE MEAL TOGETHER A DAY

BY HOUSEHOLD FAMILY ORIENTATION INDEX

	Dominant %	Positive %	Subordinate %
Yes	91	87	74
No	9	13	26
Number of respondents	(652)	(538)	(363)

What kind of atmosphere prevails when American families sit around the table to eat? Is it a time for sharing daily experiences, or are individual family members too absorbed in their own lives to do more than eat and run? Is it a highly structured time, or one when people can feel relaxed? Has the television become the primary focal point, taking the place of conversation?

Over half (56%) of those who eat together as a family describe their meals as a time when the **family shares ideas and daily experiences**, while far fewer (7%) say specifically that it is a **time to discuss family problems.** Nearly one in four (23%) describe mealtimes as a time of **little conversation but a relaxed mood.** Only 8% say that during their shared meals, the family's **attention is focused on TV or reading material.** (See Table 4.7.)

TABLE 4.7: Please tell me which of the following best describes your family's experience at mealtime?

	%
Relaxed mood/little conversation	23
Family shares ideas/experiences	56
Time when problems are discussed	7
Attention on TV/stereo/reading	8
Other	6
Number of respondents	(1386)

Household Family Orientation also influences the atmosphere around the table, with those with a **Dominant Family Orientation** most likely to share experiences, and those with a **Subordinate Family Orientation** most likely to report a relaxed mood but little conversation. (See Table 4.8.) **Family Satisfaction**, again, has no impact on mealtime mood.

TABLE 4.8: Please tell me which of the following best describes your family's experience at mealtime.

BY HOUSEHOLD FAMILY ORIENTATION INDEX

	Dominant %	Positive %	Subordinate %
Family shares ideas/experiences	60	56	48
Relaxed mood/little conversation	19	26	27
Number of respondents	(593)	(464)	(271)

Families and Leisure Time

Given the strong relationship between family time and commitment, it is important to examine how much leisure time is actually spent with family members as opposed to others. The study indicates that a spouse and one's own children are the most frequent leisure time companions.* Among the public at large, six

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* This corresponds to the findings of a 1983 Research & Forecasts study, Where Does the Time Go, which showed that spending time with family is the number one leisure objective for an overwhelming majority (79%) of Americans.

in ten (59%) people spend most of their time with their spouse or intimate companion, and four in ten (40%) spend it with their own children. A third (33%) spend most leisure time with close friends, and nearly a quarter (23%) do so alone. (See Table 4.9.)

TABLE 4.9: Who do you spend most of your leisure time with?

	%
Spouse or intimate companion	59
Own children	40
Close friends	33
By yourself	23
Other family members	18
Parents	12
Business associates	7
In-laws	6
Children of spouse or intimate companion	5

Number of respondents (1874)

In this case it is not **Household Family Orientation** but **Family Satisfaction** which turns out to have a strong impact on the likelihood of spending time with a spouse or intimate companion and by oneself, but on no other leisure time partners. Those who are **Very Satisfied** and those who are **Least Satisfied** are equally likely, for example, to spend most of their leisure time with close friends. (See Table 4.10.)

TABLE 4.10: Whom do you spend most of your leisure time with?

	BY SATISFACTION INDEX		
	Very Satisfied %	Moderately Satisfied %	Least Satisfied %
Spouse or intimate companion	82	76	65
By yourself	12	16	23
Number of respondents	(399)	(338)	(358)

Of course, with whom one spends leisure time is also a function of the membership of one's family, as well as certain demographic factors. Eight out of ten (81%) married respondents say they spend most of their leisure time with their spouse. Whites are far more likely than blacks (62% vs. 36%) to spend time with their spouse. This statistic is most probably an indication of the large number of black single-parent families. There is also a slight correlation between income and spending leisure time with one's spouse. Those in the higher-income brackets are more likely to do so. (See Table 4.11.)

A large majority of the people with children living at home spend most of their leisure time with their children. Surprisingly, mothers are no more likely to spend most of their leisure time with children than fathers, and there is no difference in the

likelihood of married and divorced people spending most of their leisure time with their children.

Those who are single spend most of their leisure time with close friends (52%) or alone (33%). Less than a third (30%) of single people say they spend most of their lesiure time with an intimate companion. Single and divorced people are more likely than married couples to spend a lot of time with other family members and their parents.

TABLE 4.11: Who do you spend most of your leisure time with?

BY KEY DEMOGRAPHIC VARIABLES

	Spouse or Intimate Companion %	Own Children %	Close Friends %	By Yourself %	Other Family Members %	Parents %	Business Associates %	Number of Respondent
BY MARITAL STATUS								
Married	81	50	22	15	14	9	6	(1155)
Separated/Divorced	26	49	44	32	24	22	12	(149)
Single	30	7	52	33	23	22	11	(395)
Widowed	11	39	48	46	23	4	8	(172)
BY ETHNIC GROUP								
White	62	39	33	22	17	12	8	(1568)
Black	36	41	29	34	23	17	7	(160)
Other	53	45	32	20	16	11	6	(139)

	Spouse or Intimate Companion %	Own Children %	Close Friends %	By Yourself %	Other Family Members %	Parents %	Business Associates %	Number of Respondents
BY GENDER (PARENTS ONLY)								
Male	77	70	19	15	13	9	8	(364)
Female	59	74	27	20	19	13	6	(472)
BY INCOME								
$10,000 or less	35	39	37	38	19	13	6	(301)
$10,001 to $15,000	57	38	34	19	13	11	8	(199)
$15,001 to $20,000	57	43	32	20	24	14	7	(255)
$20,001 to $30,000	67	47	34	24	21	13	8	(367)
$30,001 to $40,000	68	43	30	21	14	13	8	(242)
More than $40,000	72	33	29	17	14	7	8	(319)

Television and the Home

While television has not in any way come to dominate the dinner hour in most homes, watching television programs or movies on a VCR is a family activity in most homes. Seven in ten (71%) households watch TV together with some frequency. Four in ten (41%) say they do very often, and three in ten (30%) do sometimes. (See Table 4.12.)

TABLE 4.12: How often does your whole household family get together to watch movies on a VCR or TV program?

	%	
Very often	41	71
Sometimes	30	
Not very often	20	
Never	8	

Number of respondents (1612)

Those with a **Dominant Family Orientation** are much more likely to make television watching a family activity than those with a **Subordinate Family Orientation.** Nearly half (47%) of those with a **Dominant Orientation** orientation watch television together very often, compared to less than a third (30%) of those with a **Subordinate Orientation.** (See Table 4.13.)

TABLE 4.13: How often does your whole household family get together to watch movies on a VCR or TV program?

BY HOUSEHOLD FAMILY ORIENTATION INDEX

	Dominant %	Positive %	Subordinate %
Very often	47	42	30
Sometimes	30	31	30
Not very often	16	21	25
Never	7	6	14
Number of respondents	(649)	(535)	(360)

Education and income also play a role. College graduates are less likely than those with less education to spend a lot of time watching TV as a family, as are those in the lower-income groups. (See Table 4.14.)

TABLE 4.14: How often does your whole household family get together to watch movies on a VCR or TV program?

BY EDUCATION

	8th Grade or Less %	Some High School %	High School Graduate %	Some College %	College Graduate %
Very often	52	48	40	38	32
Sometimes	12	26	32	35	36
Not very often	23	18	18	22	22
Never	12	7	9	5	9
Number of respondents	(175)	(248)	(661)	(267)	(253)

BY INCOME

	$10,000 or Less %	$10,001 to $15,000 %	$15,001 to $20,000 %	$20,001 to $30,000 %	$30,001 to $40,000 %	More than $40,000 %
Very often	47	43	43	43	42	33
Sometimes	26	22	29	35	35	33
Not very often	17	23	21	16	18	25
Never	10	12	7	5	4	10
Number of respondents	(211)	(170)	(230)	(326)	(218)	(294)

Where do families tend to spend their indoor time together? For many American families, the living room is the place where they spend much of their family time. Two-thirds (66%) of those who watch TV as a family watch it in the living room. Only a quarter

(28%) watch TV together in the den. (See Table 4.15.)

Nearly six in ten (58%) people say their family spends most of their leisure time together in the living room, and a quarter (25%) say in the den. One in ten (9%) spend most of their leisure time as a family in the kitchen.

TABLE 4.15: In what room does your family most often watch TV together, and in what room do you and your household family spend most of your leisure time together?

	Watch Television %	Spend Leisure Time %
Living room	66	9
Den/family room	28	58
Bedroom	4	3
Dining room	1	25
Kitchen	1	2
Other	0	2

Number of respondents (1475)

Sufficiency of Family Time

Given the time pressures inherent in contemporary life, can people ever be satisfied with the amount of time devoted to their families? Just over half (54%) of the people with household families are content with the amount of time they spend with their family. But most everyone else (44%) would like to spend more time with their family. (See Table 4.16.)

TABLE 4.16: Would you say that you spend about the right amount of time with your family, you wish you had more time to spend with them, or you wish you could spend less time with them?

	%
You spend just right amount of time	54
You wish you had more time	44
You wish you could spend less time	2
Number of respondents (1620)	

People under 50 years of age, those most likely to have children at home, are the most inclined to want to spend more time with their family. Dual-career parents are particularly inclined to wish they had more time with their family. Surprisingly, neither **Household Family Orientation** nor **Family Satisfaction** have any impact on this desire.

TABLE 4.17: SUFFICIENCY OF TIME SPENT WITH FAMILY

BY AGE

	18 to 24 %	25 to 34 %	35 to 49 %	50 to 64 %	65 and Over %
You spend just about right amount of time	52	45	51	60	77
You wish you had more time	46	52	49	36	23
You wish you could spend less time	2	3	1	3	0
Number of respondents	(286)	(425)	(412)	(303)	(186)

BY HOUSEHOLD STRUCTURE

	Dual-Career with Children %	Single Parent with Children %	Traditional Family %
You spend just right amount of time	36	59	51
You wish you had more time	63	38	47
You wish you could spend less time	1	3	2
Number of respondents	(265)	(139)	(352)

Closeness--Static or Dynamic?

The sense of family closeness is one of the three factors which determines **Family Orientation.** As revealed in Part One, most people (79%) consider their household close. But is the sense of family closeness static, or do people experience a change in this sense as household members grow older and the family goes through other transitions? Two-thirds (67%) of Americans not living alone say their family is as close now as it has always been, but one in four (25%) are now closer than ever before. Only 7% say they are less close then they once had been. (See Table 4.18.)

TABLE 4.18: Which of the following best expresses your household situation?

	%
It is closer now than ever	25
It has always been this close	67
It is not as close as before	7
It has never been close	1

Number of respondents (1638)

What accounts for the reported increase in closeness in the home? Those who say their family is now closer than ever attribute this increase in closeness to an **increase in love, understanding, and respect** (20%), to **better communication** (14%), or **to spending more time together** (13%). (See Table 4.19.)

TABLE 4.19: What is the single most important factor affecting the increase in closeness at home?

	%
Love/understanding/respect	20
Better communication	14
Spending more time together	13
Maturity/personal growth	10
Birth of baby	9
Marriage	6
God/religion	6
Family member illness or death	6
Having more money	3
Other	14

Number of respondents (405)

Those few who are less close now than previously attribute this to the fact that **their children are growing up** and there is less contact now with them (26%) or to **something gone awry in their marriage** (23%). (See Table 4.20.)

TABLE 4.20: What is the single most important factor affecting the decrease in closeness at home?

	%
Children growing up/less contact	26
Marriage or divorce	23
Aging	9
Geographic distance from family	9
Children moving away	5
Not enough money	4
Other	25

Number of respondents (114)

CHAPTER FIVE: THE BROADER PICTURE--FOCUS ON NON-HOUSEHOLD FAMILY

While the hearth may represent the heart of the family for most people, almost all Americans have people they consider family who live outside the home. (See Table 5.1.) Different individuals may experience different degrees of involvement and commitment to their non-household family, and in fact, a single individual may feel quite differently about various family members. The critical difference between commitment and involvement with these relatives, of course, is that since they are not present in the household, a special effort must be made to maintain contact--telephone calls, visits, and family gatherings.

TABLE 5.1: Who are the people you consider to be your family whom you do not live with?

	%
Sister	51
Brother	48
Mother	45
Father	37
Own children	31
In-laws	29
Aunt	21
Uncle	19
Nephew/niece	19
Cousin(s)	17
Grandparent(s)	12
Grandchildren	11
Great-grandparent(s)	2
Intimate companion	2
Stepchildren	1
Spouse	1
Other	4
Have no other family	5

Number of respondents (1991)

Measuring the Closeness of Non-Household Family

In order to test whether or not family values are declining, it is important to look at how people feel about and interact with their extended family. The closeness of the non-household family is measured not by the amount of leisure time spent together, but by the amount of visiting and telephone contact, degree of involvement in family functions, amount of enjoyment derived from time spent together, and how this time is spent together. (Note that the sample considered in this chapter excludes those with no living family outside their household (5%).)

Distance, of course, can play a major role in the amount of personal contact the people can have with their relatives. Despite the mobility of our society today, most people tend to live near their families. Seven in ten people (71%) with a living parent not part of their household reside reasonably close to that parent (within a 100-mile range), and a significant number (44%) live very close, less than ten miles away. Only one in five (20%) live over 500 miles away. (See Table 5.2.)

TABLE 5.2: How far away do your parents live?

	%	
Less than 10 miles away from you	44	71
10 to 100 miles away from you	27	
101 to 500 miles away from you	12	
Over 500 miles away from you	20	
Number of respondents (1111)		

College graduates are the most likely to live far away from home, over 500 miles away. Blacks are more likely than whites to live less than ten miles away. And parents in dual-career families are less likely than other types of parents to live close to their own parents. (See Table 5.3.)

TABLE 5.3: DISTANCE FROM PARENTS

	Less than 10 Miles %	10 to 100 Miles %	101 to 500 Miles %	Over 500 Miles %	Number of Respondents
BY EDUCATION					
8th grade or less	42	35	11	11	(59)
Some high school	57	23	8	17	(130)
High school graduate	50	27	12	13	(441)
Some college	40	28	12	23	(238)
College graduate	28	24	16	34	(235)
BY ETHNIC GROUP					
White	43	28	13	19	(934)
Black	53	22	5	21	(90)
Other	39	17	15	30	(82)
BY FAMILY STRUCTURE					
Dual-career with children	40	33	11	20	(216)
Single parent with children	59	22	12	8	(92)
Traditional family	51	22	12	17	(276)

A significant minority of people with living parents speak to them quite frequently. Four in ten (44%) speak to them more than once a week, with one in five (19%) saying they speak every day. (See Table 5.4.)

TABLE 5.4: How frequently do you visit with your parents or speak to them on the phone?

	%	
Every day	19	44%
More than once a week	25	
About once a week	21	
A few times a month	16	
Once a month	10	
Less than once a month	9	
Number of respondents	(1142)	

Those with a **Dominant Family Orientation** are more likely than those with a **Subordinate Family Orientation** to speak to their parents on a daily basis. (See Table 5.5.) Women are twice as likely as men to speak every day (26% vs. 12%), and blacks are almost twice as likely as whites to speak this often (34% vs. 18%). Level of education also has some bearing on the frequency of telephone contact: only 11% of college graduates have daily contact with their parents. (See Table 5.6.) Again, family structure bears some relationship to the frequency of contact. Dual-career families are less likely than other families to speak to their own parents frequently.

TABLE 5.5: FREQUENCY OF PARENTAL CONTACT

BY HOUSEHOLD FAMILY ORIENTATION INDEX

	Dominant %	Positive %	Subordinate %
Every day	23	19	14
More than once a week	23	28	23
About once a week	21	20	23
A few times a month	14	14	21
Once a month	10	10	10
Less than once a month	8	9	9
Number of respondents	(402)	(357)	(219)

TABLE 5.6: FREQUENCY OF PARENTAL VISITS AND PHONE CONVERSATIONS

	Every Day %	More than Once a Week %	About Once a Week %	A Few Times a Month %	Once a Month %	Less than Once a Month %	Number of Respondents
BY GENDER							
Male	12	27	23	18	10	10	(559)
Female	26	23	20	14	10	7	(583)
BY ETHNIC GROUP							
White	18	26	22	16	10	8	(957)
Black	34	19	14	12	9	12	(98)
Other	18	25	20	13	15	9	(82)
BY EDUCATION							
8th grade or Less	19	28	14	11	16	11	(59)
Some high school	25	22	19	15	9	10	(133)
High school graduate	22	26	21	14	9	7	(459)
Some college	18	25	23	16	8	11	(245)
College graduate	11	25	23	20	11	9	(239)
BY FAMILY STRUCTURE							
Dual-career with children	15	22	27	17	9	9	(224)
Single parent with children	32	32	11	10	10	5	(92)
Traditional family	22	26	23	14	9	6	(282)

Visits with non-household family members in general follow a similar pattern. Nearly half of the sample (48%) visit with relatives at least once a month, and one out of four (25%) do so at least once a week. One in ten (9%) get together every two or three months, but nearly half (45%) get together less **frequently**, including 18% who see them once a year or less. (See Table 5.7.)

TABLE 5.7 How often do most of these family members get together?

	%	
Several times a week	10	
At least once a week	15	
Several times a month	10	
At least once a month	13	
Every two or three months	9	
A few times a year	27	45
Once a year	11	
Less than once a year	7	

Number of respondents (1877)

Surprisingly, the number of visits made to non-household family members is <u>not</u> a function of **Household Family Orientation** or **Family Satisfaction.** There are, however, correlations between visiting family and race, income, and education. Black families are more likely that white families to get together once a week or more (35% vs. 23%). People with more education and people in the higher-income groups are somewhat less likely to visit this frequently. (See Table 5.8.) There are no differences among

traditional, dual-career, and single-parent families in the frequency of getting together with non-household family members.

TABLE 5.8: FREQUENCY OF FAMILY VISITS

	At Least Once a Week %	At Least Once a Month %	A Few Times a Year %	Once a Year Or Less %	Number of Respondents
BY ETHNIC GROUP					
White	23	23	37	17	(1566)
Black	35	22	25	18	(162)
Other	26	19	31	24	(141)
BY INCOME					
$10,000 or less	25	22	33	20	(303)
$10,001 to $15,000	32	18	34	16	(203)
$15,001 to $20,000	32	25	31	13	(256)
$20,001 to $30,000	22	23	36	19	(365)
$30,001 to $40,000	24	22	39	15	(243)
More than $40,000	17	23	39	22	(319)
BY EDUCATION					
8th grade or less	21	16	44	18	(217)
Some high school	30	24	28	17	(266)
High school graduate	28	25	32	15	(737)
Some college	21	23	36	21	(330)
College graduate	17	18	44	21	(317)

Reasons for Family Gatherings

As one would expect, the most common reasons for family gatherings are **traditional holidays** such as Thanksgiving and major religious celebrations. Eight in ten (83%) people say these holidays are the main occasions on which their entire family gets together. For six in ten (62%) people, it is **special occasions** such as weddings. Times of tragedy or difficulty also bring many families together. Over half (55%) of those interviewed mention illness or death as occasions on which most family members gather. (See Table 5.9.)

But many families require no particular holiday or other occasion to get together. Fully half of the surveyed public (51%) say their family gets together **whenever possible**, for no special reason. This is even more than those who gather for official **family reunions** (43%). Finally, three in ten people (30%) say they gather for **weekend meals or other activities**. This finding is in keeping with the percentage of people (35%) who say they see their non-household family at least several times a month.

TABLE 5.9: What are the main occasions on which your entire family, those you live with and other family members, get together?

	%
Traditional holidays	83
Special occasions	62
Illness or funerals	55
Whenever possible/no special occasion	51
Family reunions	43
Weekend meals or other activities	30
Other	3

Number of respondents (1884)

Why do people attend these family functions? Is it just an unavoidable obligation? On the contrary, taking pleasure in family company is the most important reason for attending such gatherings. Two-thirds (64%) of the public say the one primary reason they attend family gatherings is because they enjoy **spending time with their family.** Another one in five (21%) say their primary reason is that they **very much value** these gatherings, expressing a similarly positive motivation. Only 6% say they go out of a sense of obligation, and only 2% say they go because they don't want to hurt anyone's feelings or because everyone else goes. (See Table 5.10.)

TABLE 5.10: What is the one primary reason you attend these events?

	%
I enjoy spending time with family	64
I value family gatherings	21
It's an obligation	6
I like to catch up on family affairs	4
I don't want to hurt feelings	2
Everyone else goes	2
Other	1

Number of respondents (1863)

Household Family Orientation affects the tendency to attend certain family gatherings, including reunions, weekend meals, and the non-specific get-togethers. Those with a **Dominant Family Orientation** are also somewhat more likely to attend because they enjoy spending time with their extended family. (See Table 5.11.)

TABLE 5.11: MAIN OCCASIONS ON WHICH ENTIRE FAMILY GETS TOGETHER

BY HOUSEHOLD FAMILY ORIENTATION INDEX

	Dominant %	Positive %	Subordinate %
Family reunions	47	46	35
Weekend meals or other activities	34	32	23
Whenever possible/no special occasion	54	54	44
Number of respondents	(659)	(540)	(367)

Time Sufficiency

Given two facts already cited--that most people consider family either the most important or one of the most important elements of their lives, and that less than half of the population get together with their relatives more than several times a month--it is not surprising that a majority of survey respondents are not satisfied with the amount of time they spend with their non-household family. Only 38% say they spend just about the right amount of time with them, while six in ten (61%) people wish they could spend more time with these family members. Hardly anyone (2%) would choose to spend less than they already do. (See Table 5.12.)

The wish to spend more time with relations is not just a vague impulse for ever more family time, but is based on real experience. People who spend the most time with their non-household family members are the most likely to say they spend just the right amount of time with them. Over half (54%) of the people who see their family several times per week say this is the right amount of time, compared with 45% of those who see their family every two to three months and only 20% of those who see them a few times a year. Those who see their family infrequently say they wish they could see them more often. (See Table 5.13.)

TABLE 5.12: Would you say that you spend just about the right amount of time with your family, you wish you had more time to spend with them, or you wish you could spend less time with them?

	%
You spend just about the right amount of time	38
You wish you had more time	61
You wish you could spend less time	2
Number of respondents	(1876)

TABLE 5.13: SUFFICIENCY OF TIME WITH NON-HOUSEHOLD FAMILY

BY HOW OFTEN FAMILY GETS TOGETHER

	Several Times Per Week %	At Least Once Per Week %	Several Times Per Month %	At Least Once Per Month %	Every 2 to 3 Months %	A Few Times Per Year %	Once or Less Per Year %
You spend just right amount of time	54	43	45	29	29	20	22
You wish you had more time	45	56	53	69	69	79	76
You wish you could spend less time	1	1	2	2	2	1	2
Number of respondents	(274)	(179)	(239)	(165)	(498)	(201)	(124)

Family Satisfaction also plays a key role. Those with the highest degree of **Satisfaction** with family relationships are the most likely to believe that they are already spending the right amount

of time with non-family members, while those with the least satisfaction are somewhat more likely to express the desire to spend more time with family (See Table 5.14.)

TABLE 5.14: SUFFICIENCY OF TIME WITH NON-HOUSEHOLD FAMILY

BY FAMILY SATISFACTION INDEX

	Very Satisfied %	Moderately Satisfied %	Least Satisfied %
You spend just the right amount of time	42	38	32
You wish you had more time	57	60	65
You wish you could spend less time	1	1	3
Number of respondents	(400)	(342)	(359)

Family Activities: Fun and Enjoyment

A true understanding of family time in American households can not simply be gleaned from the time spent together, whether at meals or on vacation. What do people actually enjoy most doing with their families?

Of all the activities engaged in by families, outdoor activities and vacations are the ones cited most frequently. One in four (26%) people say they enjoy outdoor activities the most, and one

in five (19%) enjoy travel and vacations the most. Sixteen percent (16%) enjoy watching TV together, 14% enjoy talking, and the same number enjoy non-team sports. (See Table 5.15.) The list shows, however, that the overwhelming preference is for activities outside the house.

TABLE 5.15: Of all the activities you do with a family member or members, which three do you enjoy the most?

	%
Outdoor activities	26
Travel/vacations	19
Just being together	19
Watching television	16
Talking	14
Playing non-team sports	14
Family meals	12
Going out to eat	11
Visiting family members	11
Religious activities	10
Family gathering/events/holdays	9
Going to movies	9
Shopping	9
Partying/socializing/entertaining	8
Family outings/day trips	7
Playing team sports	7
Watching sports	7
Indoor games	7
Taking walks	6
Picnics	6
Playing/activities with children	5
Reading/doing homework	4
Water sports/sailing/boating	4
Driving around/taking rides	4
Gardening/yardwork	3
Household projects/housework	2
Attending cultural events (theater/etc.)	2
Listening to music	1
Other hobbies	1
Doing arts and crafts	1
Dancing	1
Sex	1
Performing music together	1
Computer games/activities	1
Other	9

Number of respondents (1706)

But for a sizeable minority (19%) it is not the nature of the activity that counts--they enjoy just being together. In fact, many people say they derive satisfaction simply from being in the company of their family members, and this may be more important than any exchange of opinion or ideas or even the giving of emotional support. Respondents identify this as the most important reason for seeking the company of family members. (See Table 5.16.) More than four in ten (43%) members of the surveyed public say that **just being together** is the most important element of spending time with their family. A third (35%) find **talking and sharing experiences** to be the most important part of spending time together and one in ten (10%) say the **emotional support they get from family** is most important.

People over 65 are more likely to identify just being together as most important and significantly less likely to value talking and sharing experiences. Those **Very Satisfied** with family relationships are also more likely to enjoy the state of being together, while those **Least Satisfied** tend to prefer talking and sharing experiences (See Table 5.17.)

TABLE 5.16: Which one of the following best describes the most important element of spending time with your family?

	%
Just being together	43
Talking and sharing experiences	35
Giving emotional support	10
Helping family members	8
Learning from other family members	3
Number of respondents	(1873)

TABLE 5.17: Which one of the following best describes the most important element of spending time with your family?

BY FAMILY SATISFACTION INDEX

	Very Satisfied %	Moderately Satisfied %	Least Satisfied %
Just being together	51	42	40
Talking and sharing experiences	32	34	41
Number of respondents	(398)	(342)	(361)

BY AGE

	18 to 24 %	25 to 34 %	35 to 49 %	50 to 64 %	65 and Over %
Just being together	40	43	37	42	57
Talking and sharing experiences	36	39	40	34	20
Number of respondents	(309)	(472)	(455)	(357)	(273)

Positive Influences on Family Life

Another indication of the continuing importance of family life is the emphasis many people place on the interaction between family members. More than any other factor, the **interaction between immediate and extended family members** is seen by a majority (61%) of Americans as having the most positive effect on the quality of their family life (See Table 5.18.)

Other factors which are seen to have a positive effect on family life are **religious beliefs, practices, and organizations** (cited by 49%), **schools and educational programs** (cited by 38%), and **neighbors and the surrounding community** (cited by 33%). One in five (22%) say their job, and an equal number (22%) say radio, TV, and movies have a positive effect on family life.

TABLE 5.18: Which three items have the most positive effect on the quality of your family life?

	%
Interaction between family members	61
Religious beliefs, etc.	49
Schools and educational programs	38
Neighbors and community	33
Your job	22
Radio, TV, and movies	22
Neighborhood and community organizations	17
Government programs serving family	7
Family service agencies	4
None	4

Number of respondents (1841)

Household Family Orientation has a strong impact on the beneficial effects attributed to certain key factors, but not on the value of interaction between family members--those with **Dominant, Positive,** and **Subordinate Family Orientations** appear to be in equal agreement about its importance. Family members with a **Dominant Orientation,** however, are far more likely to cite religious beliefs, as well as placing more emphasis on neighborhood and community organizations. Members of the **Subordinate** group, on the other hand, place greater emphasis on the external factors of their job and popular entertainment such as radio, TV, and movies. (See Table 5.19.)

TABLE 5.19: ITEMS HAVING THE MOST POSITIVE EFFECT ON THE QUALITY OF LIFE

	BY HOUSEHOLD FAMILY ORIENTATION INDEX		
	Dominant %	Positive %	Subordinate %
Interaction between family members	62	62	58
Religious beliefs, etc.	56	49	40
Schools and educational programs	40	42	39
Neighbors and community	35	32	33
Your job	19	22	27
Radio, TV, and movies	19	20	31
Neighborhood and community organizations	20	16	11
Number of respondents	(648)	(530)	(358)

While household orientation does not affect the value attributed to interaction between family members, age and education do. People most likely to have young children (those between the ages of 25 and 49) are the most inclined to consider this an important positive influence, as are college graduates. (See Table 5.20 and 5.21.)

Age also affects the perception of the benefits of other factors. Older people are more likely to cite religious beliefs and community and less likely to say school or jobs. People under 25 are considerably more likely than those older to cite radio, TV, and movies.

TABLE 5.20: Which three items have the most positive effect on the quality of your family life?

	BY AGE				
	18 to 24 %	25 to 34 %	35 to 49 %	50 to 64 %	65 and Over %
Interaction between family members	54	66	67	56	56
Religious beliefs, etc.	39	46	50	56	58
Schools and educational programs	43	37	44	35	28
Neighbors and community	29	36	29	27	43
Radio, TV, and movies	32	23	18	20	16
Neighborhood and community organizations	14	16	16	18	21
Number of respondents	(298)	(470)	(448)	(352)	(264)

TABLE 5.21: Which three items have the most positive effect on the quality of your family life?

	BY EDUCATION				
	8th Grade or Less %	Some High School %	High School Graduate %	Some College %	College Graduate %
Interaction between family members	42	54	61	66	74
Religious beliefs, etc.	60	45	49	49	47
Schools and educational programs	31	32	39	40	42
Neighbors and community	32	39	32	35	29
Your job	19	14	24	20	27
Government programs serving family	12	6	7	6	3
Number of respondents	(210)	(257)	(723)	(327)	(314)

Focus On Parents of Grown Children

For many people, ties with their children remain strong even after their children have left home. A large majority of people with grown children speak to them once a week or more. Over a quarter (28%) speak to them every day, a quarter (26%) speak more than once a week, and a quarter (24%) speak about once a week. Only one in twenty parents (5%) speak less than once a month with their grown children. (See Table 5.22.)

Women are no more inclined than men to speak to their children frequently, and education has only a slight bearing: people with less than a high school education are the most inclined to speak every day with their children. Single parents have more frequent contact with their grown children than parents in traditional or dual-career families do. Dual-career parents have the least amount of frequent contact. (See Table 5.23.)

TABLE 5.22: Thinking of your children who don't live with you, how often do you visit them or speak to them on the phone?

	%
Every day	28
More than once a week	26
About once a week	24
A few times a month	12
Once a month	5
Less than once a month	4
Never	1
Number of respondents	(729)

TABLE 5.23: FREQUENCY OF VISITS OR PHONE CALLS WITH NON-RESIDENT CHILDREN

	Everyday %	More than Once a Week %	About Once a Week %	A Few Times a Month %	Once a Month %	Less than Once a Month %	Never %	Number of Respondents
BY EDUCATION								
8th Grade or less	35	16	23	13	5	7	0	(168)
Some high school	41	21	22	9	5	2	0	(123)
High school graduate	21	32	22	14	5	5	1	(258)
Some college	23	34	25	13	2	3	0	(95)
College graduate	20	28	31	9	7	3	1	(78)
BY FAMILY STRUCTURE								
Dual-career with children	18	33	28	13	4	4	0	(71)
Single parent with children	32	22	20	16	5	2	4	(52)
Traditional family	27	33	16	15	8	1	0	(89)

Not only do parents remain in close contact with their grown children, but grown children tend to live near their parents. Over half (54%) of the respondents with grown children have a child living within ten miles of them. A third (34%) have a

child living between ten and 100 miles away. And nearly one in three (29%) have a child living far, over 500 miles away. (See Table 5.24.)

There is a relationship between distance of children and education, race, and income. College graduates are significantly less likely than others to have a grown child living within ten miles of them. Blacks and those earning less than $40,000 are also more likely to have a child living less than ten miles away. (See Tables 5.25.)

TABLE 5.24: Do your grown children live:

	%
Less than 10 miles away from you	54
10 to 100 miles away from you	34
101 to 500 miles away from you	21
Over 500 miles away from you	29
Number of respondents	(701)

TABLE 5.25: DISTANCE FROM YOUR CHILDREN

	Less than 10 Miles %	10 to 100 Miles Away %	101 to 500 Miles Away %	Over 500 Miles Away %	Number of Respondents
BY EDUCATION					
8th grade or less	64	35	22	30	(161)
Some high school	61	30	16	21	(122)
High school graduate	51	35	22	27	(245)
Some college	52	33	22	33	(94)
College graduate	39	36	25	35	(72)
BY ETHNIC GROUP					
White	51	34	20	30	(606)
Black	79	22	30	23	(59)
Other	65	46	17	15	(34)
BY INCOME					
$10,000 or less	65	39	24	26	(148)
$10,001 to $15,000	58	33	13	23	(100)
$15,001 to $20,000	59	28	27	32	(72)
$20,001 to $30,000	55	27	20	28	(127)
$30,001 to $40,000	51	40	17	28	(68)
$40,000 or more	39	32	20	35	(107)

Extending Families Across the Generations

Throughout this report many indications have been given for the strength of family ties, both within the household and extending to other family members. But how much of a sense do Americans have about their family roots, and how much do they identify with their origins?

The overwhelming majority of Americans are aware of their ethnic roots--only 7% could not answer this question. The single largest grouping (26%) say most of their ancestors originally came from Germany or Austria, while England (or the United Kingdom) was the second most frequent answer (19%). Nearly as many (17%) simply stated their background as American. (See Table 5.26.)

TABLE 5.26: From what country(ies) did most of your ancestors come from?

	%
Germany/Austria	26
England/United Kingdom	19
USA	17
Ireland	16
Scandinavia	7
Italy	6
Scotland	5
France	5
Poland	4
Other Eastern Europe	4
Africa	3
Spain/Portugal	2
Russia	2
Canada	2
Other Western Europe	2
Mexico	2
South/Central America	*
Asia/Pacific	*
Wales	*
Europe	*
Middle East	*
Greece	*
Other	*
Don't know/No answer	7

Number of respondents (1899)

* Less than .5%

The strength of personal identification with national origins varies considerably, with over a quarter (29%) each having a very strong or moderately strong identification, and nearly a quarter (23%) saying their degree of identification was not very strong. Nearly as many (19%) don't identify with their background at all. (See Table 5.27.)

TABLE 5.27: How strongly do you identify with your cultural background in terms of its beliefs and values?

	%
Very strongly	29
Somewhat strongly	29
Not very strongly	23
Not at all	19
Number of respondents	(1800)

Those with a **Dominant Family Orientation** and those with the greatest degree of **Family Satisfaction** express the strongest levels of identification with their background. (See Table 5.28.)

TABLE 5.28: How strongly do you identify with that background in terms of its beliefs and values?

BY FAMILY SATISFACTION INDEX

	Very Satisfied %	Moderately Satisfied %	Least Satisfied %
Very strongly	35	26	24
Somewhat strongly	26	38	26
Not very strongly	21	23	28
Not at all	18	13	21
Number of respondents	(382)	(318)	(337)

BY HOUSEHOLD FAMILY ORIENTATION INDEX

	Dominant %	Positive %	Subordinate %
Very strongly	32	29	21
Somewhat strongly	27	28	35
Not very strongly	22	26	23
Not at all	19	17	21
Number of respondents	(598)	(491)	(341)

Despite the general knowledge of ethnic background, most Americans don't really know very much about their ancestors. Four in ten (42%) of those surveyed say their knowledge of their family really only goes back to their own grandparents, while another one in four (27%) can go back one more generation, to

their great-grandparents. Only one in five (20%) have knowledge going back even further. Twelve percent (12%) could not say anything definite. (See Table 5.29.)

TABLE 5.29: How far back in terms of generations does your knowledge of your family go?

	%	
Grandparents	42	
Great-grandparents	27	
Great-greatgrandparents	11	20%
More than four generations	9	
Don't know/No answer	12	
Number of respondents	(2000)	

CHAPTER SIX: LIMITS TO FAMILY COMMITMENT

The commitment made to the family does have limits, however. There appears to be an intuitive acceptance of the belief that individuals need to have some independence, even protection, from the family in order to maintain a sense of self. This finds expression in a number of ways. At the same time, parents clearly place limits on the amount of sacrifices they are willing to make for their children. This is indicated in two different circumstances. Working parents appear to be less than eager to make sacrifices for their children at home, and parents whose children are setting up their own family households appear to be reluctant to offer much assistance.

Protecting the Individual in the Family

Americans are clearly sensitive to the potentially stifling and intrusive aspects of family life, and the need to protect or shield individual members from these dangers. Most Americans believe **families can be too controlling over the lives of individual members.** Forty-two percent (42%) of the public strongly agree with this statement, and an additional 41% somewhat agree. (See Table 6.1.)

TABLE 6.1: Please tell me if you agree or disagree with the following statement:

	Agree Strongly %	Agree Somewhat %	Disagree Somewhat %	Disagree Strongly %	Don't Know/ No Answer %
Families can be too controlling over the lives of individual members	42	41	10	6	2

Number of respondents (2000)

It is interesting to note that younger people and those with more education are no more likely than other people to feel that families can be too controlling. Nor do opinions on this issue have any connection with **Household Family Orientation** or **Family Satisfaction.**

This concern for the potentially stifling aspect of family life finds further expression in the stated beliefs in the rights of both children and parents to enjoy a degree of independence apart from the family. Six in ten (62%) people strongly agree that children have the right to have views different from those of their parents. (See Table 6.2.) People with more formal education, younger people, those in the higher-income groups, and those who consider themselves to be political liberals are the most likely to agree with this strongly. (See Table 6.3.)

TABLE 6.2: Please tell me if you agree or disagree with the following statements:

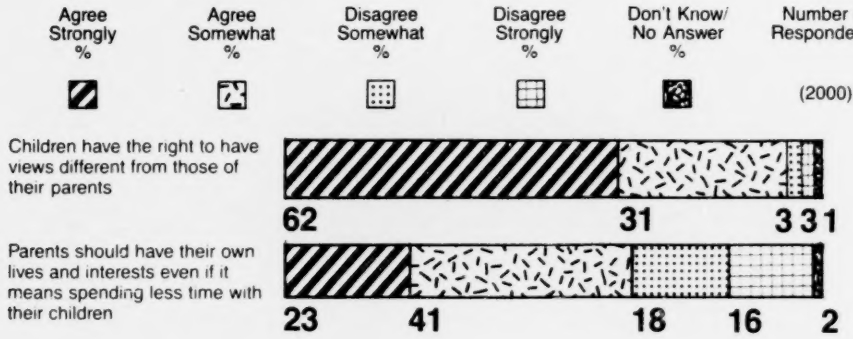


TABLE 6.3: THOSE WHO AGREE STRONGLY WITH THE STATEMENT: Children have the right to have views different from those of their parents.

	%	Number of Respondents
BY EDUCATION		
8th grade or less	54	(258)
Some high school	62	(279)
High school graduate	61	(767)
Some college	68	(341)
College graduate	71	(325)
BY AGE		
18 to 24	71	(319)
25 to 34	64	(486)
35 to 49	64	(467)
50 to 64	63	(385)
65 and over	53	(312)

	%	Number of Respondents
BY INCOME		
$10,000 or less	58	(344)
$10,001 to $15,000	61	(212)
$15,001 to $20,000	57	(273)
$20,001 to $30,000	65	(376)
$30,001 to $40,000	67	(248)
More than $40,000	70	(329)
BY POLITICAL AFFILIATION		
Conservative	61	(723)
Moderate	63	(690)
Liberal	72	(316)
None	60	(234)

At the same time, the majority of Americans believe parents should have their own lives and interests even if it means spending less time with their children. This sentiment receives far less enthusiastic support, however. Only about a quarter of the public (23%) agree with this statement strongly, and another four in ten (41%) agree to some degree. White families are more likely than black ones to agree with this. (See Tables 6.2 and 6.4.) There are no differences, however, among the various family orientations.

TABLE 6.4: Please tell me if you agree or disagree with the following statement: Parents should have their own lives and interests, even if it means spending less time with their children.

BY ETHNIC GROUP

	White %	Black %	Other %
Agree strongly	23	21	27
Agree somewhat	43	28	45
Disagree somewhat	18	21	13
Disagree strongly	15	31	15
Number of respondents	(1627)	(169)	(147)

Another measure of sensitivity to excessive interference by some family members in the lives of others can be found in the limits placed on the role of grandparents. Responses in this area further support the concept of independence within the family unit. Only a third (32%) of the surveyed public strongly believe grandparents should have an important role in raising their grandchildren. A nearly equal number (36%) somewhat agree with this notion, and a third (32%) disagree. (See Table 6.5.)

While **Household Family Orientation** and **Family Satisfaction** do not make a sizeable impact on this issue, family structure does. Single parents are the most likely of the three types of parents to strongly believe grandparents should be very involved in

raising their grandchildren. (See Table 6.6.)

TABLE 6.5: DEGREE OF AGREEMENT WITH THE STATEMENT: Grandparents should have an important role in raising their grandchildren.

	%
Agree strongly	32
Agree somewhat	36
Disagree somewhat	17
Disagree strongly	15
Number of respondents	(1977)

TABLE 6.6: DEGREE OF AGREEMENT WITH THE STATEMENT: Grandparents should have an important role in raising their grandchildren.

BY FAMILY STRUCTURE

	Dual-Career with Children %	Single Parent with Children %	Traditional Family %
Agree strongly	35	43	32
Agree somewhat	39	26	37
Disagree somewhat	15	14	19
Disagree strongly	11	18	12
Number of respondents	(264)	(137)	(352)

Finally, almost all American families recognize the need for individuals to have their own personal space which is primarily for their own use. Eighty-three percent (83%) of all respondents

say their homes provide such a sanctuary--whether a room or an area of a room--to each member of the household. (See Table 6.7.)

TABLE 6.7: Do all family members have their own special place--a room or an area of a room in your house--which is primarily for their own use?

	%
Yes	83
No	17

Number of respondents (1638)

Sacrificing for the Family

Sacrificing on behalf of one's family is often presented as a given, a moral imperative, that is ingrained in our popular culture. But how much sacrifice should parents make on behalf of their children, and what forms should it take? Surprisingly, only a third (35%) of the American public polled strongly agree with the statement: "Parents should sacrifice in order to give their children the best." Another third agree (34%) to some extent, which means nearly a third (30%) of the public take issue with this sentiment. (See Table 6.8.)

TABLE 6.8: Please tell me if you agree or disagree with the following statement:

	Agree Strongly %	Agree Somewhat %	Disagree Somewhat %	Disagree Strongly %	No Opinion %
Parents should sacrifice in order to give children the best	35	34	20	10	2

Number of respondents (2000)

Race and level of education do influence attitudes toward sacrificing. Black families are twice as likely as white families (64% and 32%, respectively) to strongly affirm that parents should sacrifice in order to give their children the best. People with less education are also more inclined to feel this way. (See Table 6.9.)

TABLE 6.9: THOSE WHO AGREE STRONGLY WITH THE STATEMENT: Parents should sacrifice in order to give their children the best.

	%	Number of Respondents
BY EDUCATION		
8th grade or less	48	(251)
Some high school	40	(281)
High school graduate	34	(756)
Some college	30	(340)
College graduate	32	(325)
BY ETHNIC GROUP		
White	32	(1639)
Black	64	(167)

The lack of enthusiasm for parental sacrifice is revealed even more starkly in actual practice. Few working people have made significant changes in their career for the sake of having time with their family members. Over half (56%) have not made any changes in their career or job. Less than one in five (17%) have reduced the number of hours they work, and only about one in ten (12%) work more at home. One in ten (10%) have quit their job, and a smaller number have taken a less challenging job (8%) or delayed job ambitions (6%).

Not only have the majority not made any changes in their career, but a majority (53%) would **not be willing** to make any sacrifices in order to spend more time with their family. Again, we find qualifications to spending time with the family.

Only one in five (20%) people would be willing to reduce the number of hours they work, and only 15% would be willing to work more at home. One in ten (10%) would take a less challenging job, and 9% would quit their job. Only 6% would delay job ambitions. (See Table 6.10.)

TABLE 6.10: What changes in your career or job have you made or would you be willing to make in order to spend time with your family?

	Changes Made %	Changes Willing to Make %
Made no changes/would make no changes	56	53
Reduce number of hours you work	17	20
Work more at home	12	15
Quit job	10	10
Take a less challenging job	8	9
Suppress or delay job ambitions	6	6
Hire outside help	3	4
Other	5	6
Number of respondents	(1258)	

Household Family Orientation plays relatively little role in a person's having made, or willingness to make, sacrifices, except that those with a **Subordinate Family Orientation** are more likely to have made no changes than those with a **Dominant Orientation.** But when it comes to future sacrifices, there is no difference between the two. (See Table 6.11.)

TABLE 6.11: What changes in your career or job have you made in order to spend time with your family?

BY HOUSEHOLD FAMILY ORIENTATION INDEX

	Dominant %	Positive %	Subordinate %
Made no changes	51	56	62
Reduce number of hours you work	20	17	12
Number of respondents	(496)	(420)	(292)

Family structure also plays a role, in that parents in dual-career families are more likely than other parents to have made no career changes for the sake of spending more time with the family.

Certain demographic differences also affect how receptive a person is to making career sacrifices for the sake of spending time with their family. More men than women say they have made no

career changes (61% vs. 50%), and more women than men have quit their job (15% vs. 4%). (See Table 6.12.)

TABLE 6.12: What changes in your career or job have you made in order to spend time with your family?

	Made No Changes %	Quit Job %	Number of Respondents
BY GENDER			
Male	61	4	(658)
Female	50	15	(598)
BY FAMILY STRUCTURE			
Dual-career with children	59	6	(256)
Single parent with children	44	14	(105)
Traditional family	44	16	(279)

People under 35 are more likely than those over 35 to consider reducing the number of hours they work. Separated people and blacks are also more willing to make changes, such as taking a less challenging job. (See Tables 6.13 and 6.14.)

TABLE 6.13: What changes would you be willing to make?

	Reduce the Number of Hours You Work %	Number of Respondents
BY AGE		
18 to 24	26	(226)
25 to 34	26	(360)
35 to 49	19	(346)
50 to 64	9	(196)
65 and over	1	(66)

TABLE 6.14: WILLINGNESS TO TAKE A LESS CHALLENGING JOB

	Take a Less Challenging Job %	Number of Respondents
BY MARITAL STATUS		
Married	10	(863)
Separated/Divorced	20	(70)
Single	10	(226)
Widowed	0	(33)
BY ETHNIC GROUP		
White	10	(863)
Black	17	(103)
Other	8	(90)

Assistance from Relatives to Parents

Considering how close Americans feel to their family, it is somewhat surprising to note how few families have received any financial or child care assistance from their parents, in-laws, or other relatives in setting up their households. This may be yet another indication of the independence of family members from each other, particularly between generations. Only 13% of those with children at home have gotten or do get much assistance in the area of **child care.** An additional 16% have received some assistance, but **nearly half** (46%) have gotten **no assistance.**

Nearly three-quarters (73%) of the surveyed public have been given assistance in meeting the **expenses of setting up a household,** and eight in ten (81%) have received no assistance in **finding a job, getting started in business,** or **finishing school.** Eight in ten (83%) have also gotten no assistance in buying major items like a car or a house, and nearly nine in ten (85%) have not gotten any help in meeting the expenses of children's schooling or medical costs. (See Table 6.15.)

TABLE 6.15: How much help do you or did you receive from parents, in-laws, or other relatives in:

	A Lot %	Some %	A Little %	None %	Number of Respondents
Looking after children	13	16	25	46	(857)
Meeting expenses in setting up a household	4	8	16	73	(856)
Meeting expenses of children's schooling or medical costs	3	5	7	85	(851)
Buying major items like a car or house	3	7	7	83	(855)
Finding a job, getting started in business, or finishing school	5	6	8	81	(853)

PART THREE:

PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS IN PERSONAL AND FAMILY LIFE

CHAPTER SEVEN: FAMILY CONFLICTS

We have seen that although a majority of Americans consider their family to be important to them, a significant number of people place limits on the measure of their family commitment. Personal fulfillment and individual autonomy have come to be as much valued in our society as the security of the family unit. Families today are far more likely than in the past to experience contrasting pressures between familial commitment on the one hand and the needs, desires, and aspirations of individual family members on the other.

Commenting on the relationship between the rising divorce rate and our preoccupation with the individual's needs, one sociologist notes that "personal life seems to have become a national obsession in 20th century America."[1] And this has become increasingly true as the decades have progressed. Indeed the popular media have come to refer to the postwar baby boom group as the "me generation." The survival of a family is no longer considered more important than the happiness of its individual members.

---

1 John Scanzoni, Shaping Tomorrow's Family, p. 29.

But how does this change in focus from the family as a whole to the individual member affect the functioning of the family? How does this tension between family commitment and the perceived need to impose limits for the sake of personal autonomy manifest itself in family life today? Are most family problems generated from within the family unit, or are they due to external factors, beyond the family's control? How do the sweeping structural changes affect the type of problems experienced in many families today, if at all, and what impact do **Household Family Orientation** and **Family Satisfaction** have on the incidence of particular family conflicts? And finally, how do Americans today cope with the problems encountered in daily family life?

Sources of Family Conflict

A majority of survey respondents reveal that they do encounter problems in their family life, if not frequently, at least some of the time. Most commonly, these conflicts originate in the dynamics of the family itself, reflecting something of the tension between the individual's desires and needs and those of the family unit.

The findings show that difficulties in interpersonal relationships are the most widely acknowledged cause of family conflict. The greater the need for individual autonomy, the more likely one is to encounter personality conflicts within the home. However, for most families these difficulties are occasional

rather than frequent, suggesting that they are not so severe as to threaten the fabric of their family life.

Nearly half (48%) of the American public point to **personality conflicts** as a frequent or occasional source of difficulty. This creates tension in the family unit more than any other factor. But external factors also play a role in disrupting the harmony of family life. **Money** is the second most common cause of family conflicts, cited by more than four in ten (45%) people. (See Table 7.1.)

Another reflection of our fast-paced era is the importance of the time factor as a source of conflict. Four in ten (39%) people say a **lack of time together** creates problems in their family. This is the third most commonly cited cause of conflict. Due to the complexity of our lives today, families have to struggle for that much valued family time. A failure to spend time together can cause resentment and hostility, or can simply cause people to drift away from one another.

Following in importance as sources of conflict are **housework** (cited by 31%), **relationship among children** (cited by 23%), **childrearing responsibilities** (cited by 22%), **health problems** (cited by 22%), and **childrearing practices** (cited by 21%). Despite popular stereotypes, conflicts resulting from **in-laws** were cited by only 22% of the sample.

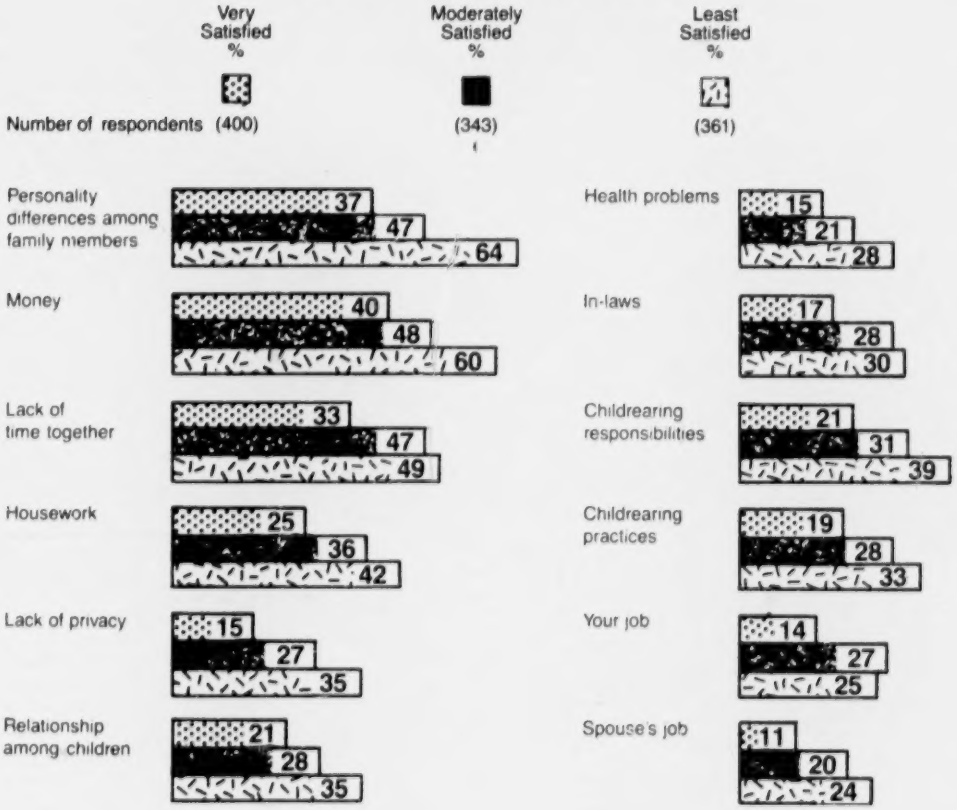
TABLE 7.1: Please tell me if the following cause conflicts in your family frequently, sometimes, rarely, or never:

	Frequently %	Sometimes %	Rarely %	Never %	Does Not Apply %	Number of Respondents
Personality differences among family members	11	48	37	15	35	1	(1890)
Money	13	45	32	17	38	0	(1884)
Lack of time together	10	39	29	14	45	1	(1882)
Housework	8	31	23	12	55	2	(1884)
Lack of privacy	5	23	18	13	63	2	(1888)
Relationship among children	5	3	18	12	51	15	(1884)
Health problems	5	22	17	14	63	1	(1885)
In-laws	6	22	16	12	53	13	(1883)
Childrearing responsibilities	4	22	18	10	46	21	(1887)
Childrearing practices	3	21	18	11	48	21	(1876)
Your job	3	20	17	10	47	23	(1875)
Unemployment	4	16	12	12	66	6	(1888)
Spouse's job	3	13	10	8	38	41	(1874)
Religion	2	10	8	10	78	1	(1883)
Care of elderly relatives	3	10	7	9	74	8	(1888)
Drug/alcohol abuse	3	8	5	5	85	2	(1882)
Stepfamilies	3	8	5	4	62	26	(1881)
Sexual problems	1	6	5	8	82	4	(1882)
Infidelity	1	5	4	7	84	4	(1870)
Retirement	1	4	3	5	68	23	(1870)
Physical abuse	1	2	1	3	92	2	(1886)

Satisfaction with **Family Relationships** has more impact across-the-board on family problems than any other single factor. It affects not only interpersonal issues, such as personality differences and sibling relationships, but also such seemingly external sources of conflict as money, job--one's own and one's spouse's, housework, health problems, and lack of privacy. In the area of personality conflicts there is nearly a 30 percentage point difference between **Very Satisfied** and **Least Satisfied** family members. (See Table 7.2.)

TABLE 7.2: FREQUENT AND OCCASIONAL SOURCES OF FAMILY CONFLICT

BY FAMILY SATISFACTION INDEX


Very Satisfied %
Moderately Satisfied %
Least Satisfied %
Number of respondents (400) (343) (361)
Personality differences among family members 37 47 64
Money 40 48 60
Lack of time together 33 47 49
Housework 25 36 42
Lack of privacy 15 27 35
Relationship among children 21 28 35
Health problems 15 21 28
In-laws 17 28 30
Childrearing responsibilities 21 31 39
Childrearing practices 19 28 33
Your job 14 27 25
Spouse's job 11 20 24

The amount of conflict experienced by **Not Very Satisfied** members indicates that the source of conflict is not in the external factors but in the dynamics of the family itself. Every possible area of disagreement evokes conflict in this type of family.

The **Satisfaction Index**, then, can be seen as a powerful indicator of the basic health of a family. In fact, it emerges as a far stronger indicator than **Household Family Orientation**, which has an impact on only some of the sources of family conflict.

Examining the effect of family orientation, we find that those with a **Subordinate Family Orientation**, those least committed to the family unit, experience more conflict due to personality differences than those with a **Dominant Family Orientation**. Complaints about lack of privacy are also significantly higher among those with a **Subordinate** rather than a **Dominant Orientation**, as are conflicts over **money** and **housework**. Other problems, however, show little or no real influence on household closeness. (See Table 7.3.)

TABLE 7.3: THOSE WHO FREQUENTLY OR SOMETIMES COMPLAIN OF FAMILY CONFLICT DUE TO THE FOLLOWING:

	BY HOUSEHOLD FAMILY ORIENTATION INDEX		
	Dominant %	Positive %	Subordinate %
Money	42	49	55
Housework	33	31	43
Health problems	22	20	29
Personality differences	45	47	63
Lack of privacy	22	25	33
Number of respondents	(659)	(539)	(367)

Family structure also affects the degree to which families suffer from these conflicts. The presence of children is a crucial factor. Personality differences are more commonly a problem for families with children living at home. Far fewer couples without children at home complain of personality conflicts, indicating that perhaps they feel less tension between their individual needs and the demands of family life. These couples are also less likely to suffer conflicts due to money, housework, jobs, or a lack of time together.

Parents in dual-career families are by far the most likely to suffer conflict as a result of a lack of time together: nearly

six in ten (58%) do. They are also significantly more likely than the others to experience discord over a number of other issues, particularly their job, their spouse's job, and who does the housework. However, despite the fact that these families are more pressured for time, they are not any more likely to argue over responsibilities directly relating to the children. (See Table 7.4.)

TABLE 7.4: THOSE WHO FREQUENTLY OR SOMETIMES HAVE CONFLICT DUE TO THE FOLLOWING:

BY TYPE OF FAMILY

	Dual-Career with Children %	Single Parent with Children %	Traditional Family %	Couples Without Children at Home %
Money	56	53	52	34
Unemployment	8	26	16	13
Your job	33	20	23	15
Spouse's job	32	4	21	10
Housework	45	36	37	21
Childrearing responsibilities	38	29	36	10
Childrearing practices	35	29	30	10
Relationship among children	30	28	29	16
In-laws	28	13	33	18
Religion	13	6	11	8
Health problems	19	20	20	21

	Dual-Career with Children %	Single Parent with Children %	Traditional Family %	Couples Without Children at Home %
Care of elderly relatives	8	6	9	7
Stepfamilies	9	10	10	6
Personality differences among family members	58	59	54	35
Lack of time together	58	38	46	27
Lack of privacy	32	30	31	11
Infidelity	4	6	4	4
Sexual problems	12	5	9	6
Physical abuse	1	1	1	4
Drug/alcohol abuse	7	9	6	6
Number of respondents	(259)	(124)	(344)	(444)

Demographic differences also affect the kinds of factors that create tension in families. Those groups which place greater emphasis on personal expression--younger people and those with more education--conflict with their family more often as a result of personality differences. (See Table 7.5.) Younger people also battle more over housework. (See Table 7.6.)

TABLE 7.5: Please tell me if personality differences cause conflicts in your family.

BY AGE

	18 to 24 %	25 to 34 %	35 to 49 %	50 to 64 %	65 and Over %
Frequently	18	15	12	8	1
Sometimes	44	41	47	29	17
Rarely	14	19	16	17	10
Never	23	24	24	45	70
Does not apply	1	1	1	1	2
Number of respondents	(313)	(474)	(458)	(362)	(276)

BY EDUCATION

	8th Grade or Less %	Some High School %	High School Graduate %	Some College %	College Graduate %
Frequently	12	13	12	10	10
Sometimes	20	34	36	46	44
Rarely	8	13	16	20	17
Never	61	37	35	23	27
Does not apply	0	2	1	1	1
Number of respondents	(220)	(268)	(743)	(331)	(319)

TABLE 7.6: Please tell me if housework causes conflicts in your family.

	BY AGE				
	18 to 24 %	25 to 34 %	35 to 49 %	50 to 64 %	65 and Over %
Frequently	16	9	9	3	2
Sometimes	26	33	27	16	6
Rarely	14	14	13	10	7
Never	43	42	49	70	83
Does not apply	1	2	2	1	3
Number of respondents	(312)	(474)	(457)	(358)	(275)

Other demographic differences affect the kinds of factors which cause conflict in families. Unemployment causes conflict in nearly a third (31%) of black families. This number is double that of white families (14%). Also, those in the lower income groups are more likely to have family conflict due to unemployment. (See Table 7.7.)

TABLE 7.7: Please tell me if unemployment causes conflicts in your family.

BY ETHNIC GROUP

	White %		Black %		Other %	
Frequently	3	14	13	31	4	19
Sometimes	11		18		15	
Rarely	12		12		10	
Never	68		53		64	
Does not apply	6		4		8	
Number of respondents	(1578)		(162)		(141)	

BY INCOME

	$10,000 or Less %	$10,001 to $15,000 %	$15,001 to $20,000 %	$20,001 to $30,000 %	$30,001 to $40,000 %	More than $40,000 %
Frequently	8	7	6	3	1	1
Sometimes	18	21	10	10	11	6
Rarely	9	9	12	12	17	14
Never	59	56	62	72	69	75
Does not apply	6	8	9	4	3	4
Number of respondents	(308)	(203)	(256)	(369)	(242)	(320)

One can conclude that the main stress within families today results from difficulties in relating to others within the family unit. The contemporary emphasis on personal autonomy may have

heightened this difficulty, but we have no way of comparing this to the amount of conflict families experienced in the past due to personality differences. Too many other factors, particularly the breakdown of traditional gender roles within many families, also play a significant role. It should be pointed out though that while personality conflicts are the leading source of family problems, half of the general population say their family does not experience this type of difficulty.

Future Difficulties Facing the Family

Although many families admit to having problems, few foresee these leading to serious marital or parent/child problems in the future. Despite alarming statistics about the divorce rate and drug abuse among teens, most Americans express a feeling of security about their marriages and a sense of confidence that drug-related problems or other serious problems with children will not enter their home.

In fact, Americans are far more concerned with such issues as care for an elderly relative than with the possibility of divorce. This concern for the elderly shows up repeatedly throughout the survey and may indicate that while the family unit has adjusted in many ways to meet new economic and social pressures, the modern family unit does not meet the needs of the elderly. Essentially, the three-generational family has disappeared and the elderly parent has been displaced. Americans

express a keen awareness of and concern for the dilemma of the elderly parent, and as we will see in Part Four of this report, many people would like to see our society take steps to address this problem.

Respondents were asked to project what problems they expect their family to face over the next five years. Responses indicate that Americans anticipate the **death of a family member** more than any other family-related problem. Half (51%) of the public say it is either very likely or somewhat likely their family will have to face the death of a family member sometime during the next five years.

Care for an elderly relative within the near future is anticipated by just over a third (37%) of the respondents. People also worry about their family's physical health. Four in ten (39%) members of the American public feel it is likely their family will face **serious health problems** over the next five years. Mentioned by fewer people, but still by a significant minority, are **financial hardship** (26%) and **depression or loneliness** (26%). (See Table 7.8.)

Two situations Americans adamantly believe their family will <u>not</u> have to face in the near future are **divorce** and **alcohol or drug problems.** Four in five Americans say it is <u>very unlikely</u> their family will face either of these problems during the next

five years.

TABLE 7.8: How likely is it that your family will face the following problems over the next five years?

	Very Likely %	Somewhat Likely %	Somewhat Unlikely %	Very Unlikely %	Number of Respondents
Death of a family member	18	33	14	35	(1718)
Serious health problems	14	25	20	40	(1769)
Care for elderly relatives	13	24	19	44	(1816)
Environmental problems such as contaminated water	8	13	15	64	(1810)
Depression or loneliness	7	19	18	56	(1844)
Financial hardship	7	19	23	51	(1830)
Parent-child problems	6	15	18	61	(1824)
Unemployment	6	14	18	62	(1822)
Marital problems	5	10	18	67	(1826)
Alcohol or drug problems	4	6	13	78	(1868)
Loss of government services to families	4	8	11	76	(1762)
Divorce	3	5	12	80	(1810)
Criminal charges against a family member	2	2	10	85	(1852)

As in the case of present family conflicts, **Family Satisfaction** exerts a tremendous influence on the expectation of future problems, ranging from marital problems to fear of environmental problems, such as contaminated water. While in certain areas, such as **marital problems**, the difference between the **Very** and **Least Satisfied** respondents can be seen in the likelihood of experiencing a particular problem, in most cases the differences are most striking by comparing the tendency to rule out the possibility completely. (See Table 7.9.)

The strongest positive differences between **Least Satisfied** and **Very Satisfied** respondents emerge regarding the following future problems:

- o Financial hardship (36% vs. 18%)
- o Marital problems (25% vs. 8%)
- o Parent-child problems (36% vs. 11%)
- o Depression or loneliness (33% vs. 12%)

TABLE 7.9: THOSE WHO SAY IT IS VERY OR SOMEWHAT LIKELY THEIR FAMILY WILL FACE THE FOLLOWING PROBLEMS DURING THE NEXT FIVE YEARS

	BY FAMILY SATISFACTION INDEX		
	Very Satisfied %	Moderately Satisfied %	Least Satisfied %
Financial hardships	18	26	36
Marital problems	8	14	25
Parent-child problems	11	26	36
Depression or loneliness	12	25	33
Number of respondents	(383)	(332)	(343)

Household Family Orientation also exerts some influence on an individual's evaluation of problems his family is likely to face. Those with a **Dominant Orientation**, the group most focused on the family unit, are less likely to anticipate facing some of these problems than those living in households with a **Subordinate Orientation.** In most cases this is expressed by those with a **Dominant Orientation** being far more willing to rule out the possibility of a particular problem altogether.

Among the problems affected this way are **divorce, financial hardship, marital problems, parent-child problems, depression** or **loneliness, alcohol or drug problems,** and **criminal charges against a family member.** (See Table 7.10.)

TABLE 7.10: THOSE WHO SAY IT IS VERY UNLIKELY THEIR FAMILY WILL FACE THE FOLLOWING PROBLEMS DURING THE NEXT FIVE YEARS

BY HOUSEHOLD FAMILY ORIENTATION INDEX

	Dominant %	Positive %	Subordinate %
Divorce	84	80	72
Financial hardship	56	49	48
Marital problems	74	66	58
Parent-child problems	64	61	53
Depression or loneliness	64	56	50
Alcohol or drug problems	84	77	70
Criminal charges against a family member	87	84	78
Number of respondents	(635)	(525)	(362)

The number of working parents in a family has little impact on the perception of future problems. There are no significant differences between dual-career and traditional families. Single parents, on the other hand, are slightly more inclined to anticipate facing some of the problems mentioned above.

Many of the potential problems are affected by a different set of demographic variables. Concern with health problems drops significantly with income. Families in the lower-income brackets are the most likely to anticipate facing serious health

problems. (See Table 7.11.)

TABLE 7.11: How likely is it that your family will face serious health problems in the next five years?

	BY INCOME					
	$10,000 or Less	$10,001 to $15,000	$15,001 to $20,000	$20,001 to $30,000	$30,001 to $40,000	More than $40,000
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Very likely	19	19	12	14	12	9
Somewhat likely	28	30	24	26	21	24
Somewhat unlikely	20	17	20	20	25	18
Very unlikely	33	35	44	40	42	49
Number of respondents	(289)	(190)	(243)	(348)	(235)	(298)

People with less formal education, separated or divorced people, black families, and those in the lower-income groups are the most likely to anticipate **financial hardship** over the next five years. (See Table 7.12).

TABLE 7.12: THOSE WHO SAY IT IS VERY OR SOMEWHAT LIKELY THEIR FAMILY WILL FACE SERIOUS FINANCIAL HARDSHIP OVER THE NEXT FIVE YEARS

	%	Number of Respondents
BY MARITAL STATUS		
Married	25	(1129)
Separated/Divorced	37	(145)
Single	25	(397)
Widowed	24	(166)
BY ETHNIC GROUP		
White	25	(1542)
Black	40	(152)
Other	25	(139)
BY INCOME		
$10,000 or less	41	(290)
$10,001 to $15,000	38	(197)
$15,001 to $20,000	27	(257)
$20,001 to $30,000	24	(364)
$30,001 to $40,000	19	(241)
More than $40,000	14	(317)

	%	Number of Respondents
BY EDUCATION		
8th grade or less	31	(210)
Some high school	31	(256)
High school graduate	26	(722)
Some college	23	(327)
College graduate	20	(317)

Due to a variety of socioeconomic factors, black families express concern over a number of issues. They are more likely to anticipate facing **parent-child problems** and **environmental problems** such as contaminated water. They are also more than twice as likely as white families to anticipate facing **unemployment.** (See Table 7.13.)

TABLE 7.13: Is it very or somewhat likely your family will suffer from the following problems in the next five years?

	White %	Black %	Other %
Parent-child problems	20	35	18
Environmental problems	19	31	26
Unemployment	18	38	19
Number of respondents	(1513)	(156)	(134)

Depression or loneliness is anticipated by more women than men, by more divorced than married or single people, and by more people in the lower than higher income groups. (See Table 7.14.)

TABLE 7.14: THOSE WHO SAY IT IS VERY OR SOMEWHAT LIKELY THEY WILL SUFFER FROM DEPRESSION OR LONELINESS IN THE NEXT FIVE YEARS

	%	Number of Respondents
BY GENDER		
Male	21	(898)
Female	31	(959)
BY MARITAL STATUS		
Married	21	(1143)
Separated/Divorced	37	(144)
Single	30	(398)
Widowed	39	(165)
BY INCOME		
$10,000 or less	38	(298)
$10,001 to $15,000	28	(194)
$15,001 to $20,000	21	(258)
$20,001 to $30,000	28	(363)
$30,001 to $40,000	23	(242)
More than $40,000	21	(314)

Families are more worried about those unavoidables such as death and aging than the more controllable ills such as marital difficulties, parent/child problems, or drug abuse. This finding serves to confirm the commitment expressed by the majority toward preserving their family life. Contrary to alarmist cries about the demise of the family, and despite the problems families today face, Americans express confidence in the continued well-being of their own family unit.

Factors that Keep Families Apart

Although personality differences are the greatest source of family conflict, these interpersonal problems do not rate high on the list of factors that keep people from spending time with their non-household family. It may be a reason for some, but distance and work are the forces most likely to keep families apart. (See Table 7.15.)

TABLE: 7.15: How often do the following keep you from family activities?

	Frequently %	Sometimes %	Rarely %	Never %	Number of Respondents
Physical distance from family members	22	29	12	37	(1891)
Work	13	30	13	33	(1834)
Money	8	20	19	53	(1895)
Conflict or disagreement about some issue	5	20	22	52	(1888)
Household duties	6	18	20	56	(1891)
Health problems	6	16	23	56	(1895)
Old grievances and grudges	3	11	16	70	(1884)
Lack of interest	3	16	17	64	(1884)

The most commonly cited reason for not visiting one's family is **physical distance.** Half (51%) of the sample cite physical distance as a factor that at times interferes with their ability to participate in family activities. This is obviously more of a problem for those groups who live further away from their families, such as college graduates. (See Table 7.16.)

TABLE 7.16: THOSE WHO SAY THE FOLLOWING FREQUENTLY OR SOMETIMES KEEPS THEM FROM FAMILY ACTIVITIES:

BY EDUCATION

	8th Grade or Less %	Some High School %	High School Graduate %	Some College %	College Graduate %
Physical distance	44	45	47	57	64
Number of respondents	(215)	(269)	(744)	(334)	(320)

One in three (33%) people are kept from family activities because of their **work.** Male respondents are no more likely than female respondents to cite work as a reason for not attending family activities. Parents in dual-career families are the most likely to be tied up with work. (See Table 7.17.)

TABLE 7.17: THOSE WHO SAY THE FOLLOWING FREQUENTLY OR SOMETIMES KEEPS THEM FROM FAMILY ACTIVITIES:

BY FAMILY STRUCTURE

	Dual-Career with Children %	Single Parent with Children %	Traditional Family %
Work	59	42	46
Number of respondents	(260)	(123)	(340)

Another hindrance is financial concerns. A quarter (28%) of the populace are on occasion prevented from seeing their family because of the **money** involved in making the visit. This is more of an issue for young people. (See Table 7.18.)

Although external factors are the most common reasons for not seeing the family, internal family disputes do contribute to keeping families apart. One in four (25%) people say **family conflict** or disagreement about some issue does, at least on occasion, prevent them from participating in family activities. Younger people are the most likely to stay away because of family disputes. A third of those under 35 years of age have refrained from visiting because of disagreements.

Other factors which keep families apart are **household duties** (cited by 24%), **health problems** (cited by 22%), and **lack of interest** (cited by 19%). Again, more younger people, those under 25 years old, cite lack of interest as a reason for not participating in family activities.

TABLE 7.18: THOSE WHO SAY THE FOLLOWING FACTORS FREQUENTLY OR SOMETIMES KEEP THEM FROM FAMILY ACTIVITIES:

	BY AGE				
	18 to 24 %	25 to 34 %	35 to 49 %	50 to 64 %	65 and Over %
Money	35	33	29	20	18
Conflict or disagreement	33	31	28	17	12
Lack of Interest	30	22	21	13	9
Number of respondents	(314)	(480)	(460)	(359)	(270)

Coping with Family Difficulties

Despite the conflicts families may encounter, the importance of family in people's lives is evidenced by the fact that people turn to another member of their family when family-related difficulties arise. Before seeking outside advice or confiding in a friend, they seek the confidence of another family member.

Half (49%) of the surveyed public contacted **another family member** during the past year to discuss family-related problems. A third (32%) contacted a **close friend**, and slightly fewer (29%) say they spoke with **no one**. Few people (10%) contacted a **minister, priest, or rabbi**, and even fewer (4%) went to a **family therapist or psychiatrist**. (See Table 8.1.)

TABLE 8.1: In the past year, who did you contact from time to time to discuss family-related problems?

	%
Other family members	49
Close friend	32
No one	29
Minister, priest, or rabbi	10
Family physician	5
Family therapist/psychiatrist	4
Teacher	3

Number of respondents (1853)

Both **Household Family Orientation** and **Family Satisfaction** have only a modest impact on the source of help sought by people with family problems. But the willingness to discuss family problems with different types of advisors--or with no one at all--is strongly affected by gender, age, marital status, and even political persuasion. Certain kinds of people tend to keep their problems to themselves, while others feel comfortable discussing them with friends. (See Table 8.2.)

TABLE 8.2: In the past year who did you contact from time to time to discuss family-related problems?

	Other Family Members %	Close Friends %	No One %	Number of Respondents
BY GENDER				
Male	45	27	36	(894)
Female	52	37	24	(965)
BY AGE				
18 to 24	57	51	13	(307)
25 to 34	56	41	22	(475)
35 to 49	48	33	26	(452)
50 to 64	35	19	48	(351)
65 and Over	45	11	43	(270)
BY EDUCATION				
8th grade or less	45	16	40	(216)
Some high school	48	32	24	(260)

	Other Family Members %	Close Friends %	No One %	Number of Respondents
High school graduate	47	33	30	(731)
Some college	48	36	28	(330)
College graduate	56	39	26	(317)
BY MARITAL STATUS				
Married	44	29	35	(1153)
Separated/Divorced	61	40	16	(149)
Single	55	45	18	(395)
Widowed	56	20	30	(164)
BY POLITICAL AFFILIATION				
Conservative	43	28	38	(677)
Moderate	52	34	24	(658)
Liberal	57	40	21	(297)
None	42	32	30	(218)

Men are more inclined than women to have discussed family problems with **no one** (36% vs. 24%), while women more often confide in **a close friend** (37% vs. 27%).

Younger people and those with more formal education are also more likely than others to have discussed family problems with a friend, while older people and those with less education are more likely not to have confided in anyone.

Separated or divorced people are more likely than married or single people to have discussed family problems with another family member. Married people are the most likely to have kept any problems to themselves.

Interestingly, those who consider themselves political conservatives are more inclined than their liberal counterparts to have spoken with no one and less likely to have spoken with other family members or a close friend about family-related problems.

Regardless of these demographic differences, it is significant that in terms of seeking advice or even just a listening ear, people turn to family before friends or professional assistance.

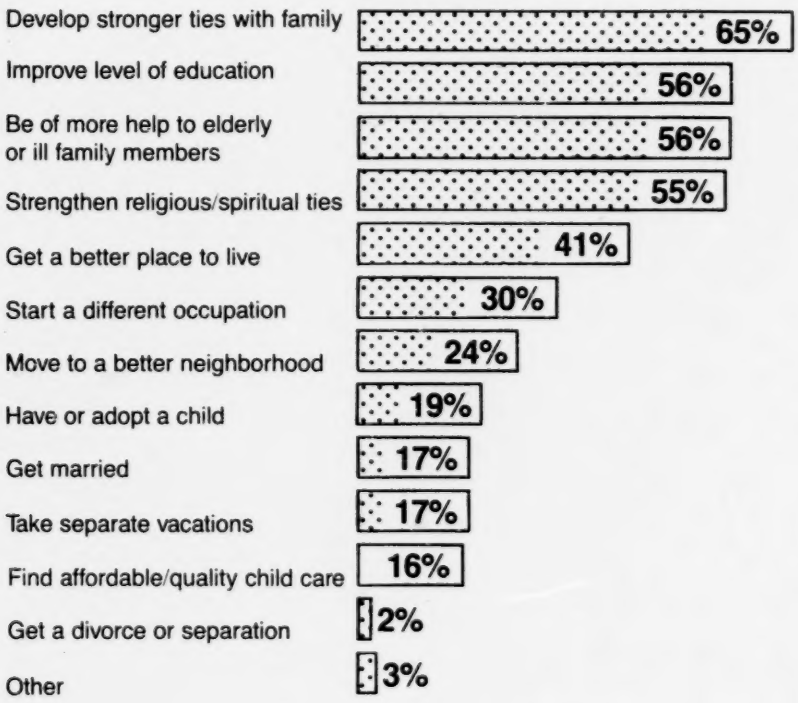
Ways to Improve Family Life

As noted Part One of this report a large majority of Americans maintain they are very satisfied with their present family life, yet they also are well aware of ways they could improve it. A large number of people would like to work on strengthening their family ties, an indication that family values are not decreasing in importance. And although the desire for some degree of autonomy has been expressed, few people mention this need when they discuss their hopes for their family in the immediate future.

Two-thirds (65%) of the public say that during the next five

years, they would like to strengthen their family relationships for the betterment of their family life. They would like to develop a stronger relationship with their parents, children, and spouse or intimate companion. (See Table 8.3.)

TABLE 8.3: Which of the following would you like to do in the next five years for the betterment of your family life?



Number of respondents (1775)

Over half say they would like to **improve the level of their education (56%), be of more help to an elderly or ill family member (56%), and strengthen religious or spiritual ties** for the betterment of their family life (55%).

Changing purely situational aspects of their lives offers less appeal. Fewer people say they would like to **get a bigger or better place to live** (41%), **start a different occupation** (30%), or **move to a better neighborhood** (24%) to improve their family life. One in five (19%) would like to have or adopt a child, and 17% would like to take separate vacations from their spouse. An equally small number (17%) would like to **get married.**

Young people appear to be the most enterprising when it comes to initiating such changes. People under 35 are the most likely to want to **strengthen family relationships.** Three-quarters (74%) of these people say they would like to do this over the next five years. This number is significantly higher than that of any other age group. People under 35 are also significantly more likely to want **a better place to live, a new occupation, a better neighborhood, and a child.** Not quite half (46%) of those under 25 mention **marriage.** (See Table 8.4.)

TABLE 8.4: Which of the following would you like to do in the next five years for the betterment of your family life?

	BY AGE				
	18 to 24 %	25 to 34 %	35 to 49 %	50 to 64 %	65 and Over %
Develop stronger ties with family	74	74	66	54	47
Improve level of education	67	64	55	45	45
Be of more help to elderly	56	53	58	52	63
Strengthen religious/spiritual ties	46	57	59	57	56
Get a better place to live	62	58	33	22	22
Start a different occupation	45	39	31	19	8
Move to a better neighborhood	32	34	20	15	12
Have or adopt a child	34	30	16	4	5
Get married	46	18	11	6	6
Find affordable/quality child care	22	27	11	6	9
Number of respondents	(309)	(471)	(444)	(323)	(224)

Level of education has only a slight bearing on the kinds of changes people would like to make in their family life. Those with less education are more likely than those with more formal education to want to **strengthen religious and spiritual ties** for the betterment of their family life. They are less likely, however, to want to have a child or get married. (See Table 8.5.)

TABLE 8.5: Which of the following would you like to do in the next five years for the betterment of your family life?

BY EDUCATION

	8th Grade or Less %	Some High School %	High School Graduate %	Some College %	College Graduate %
Strengthen religious/spiritual ties	62	56	56	57	48
Get a better place to live	35	47	39	45	43
Start a different occupation	22	32	30	35	30
Move to a better neighborhood	15	28	23	27	25
Have or adopt a child	13	15	18	26	22
Get married	8	15	17	21	23
Number of respondents	(195)	(248)	(705)	(319)	(300)

Women are more likely than men to want to **strengthen religious and spiritual ties** for the betterment of their family life, but otherwise the differences between the sexes are minimal. (See Table 8.6.)

TABLE 8.6: Which of the following would you like to do in the next five years for the betterment of your family life?

	BY GENDER	
	Male	Female
	%	%
Strengthen religious/ spiritual ties	50	61
Number of respondents	(861)	(910)

Race, on the other hand, does have a significant impact on many future choices. Black families mention a number of possibilities they would like to consider. They are more likely than white families to express interest in improving their educational level, strengthening religious and spiritual ties, getting a better place to live, starting a different occupation, moving to a better neighborhood, getting married, having or adopting a child, and finding affordable/quality child care. (See Table 8.7.)

TABLE 8.7: Which of the following would you like to do in the next five years for the betterment of your family life?

	BY ETHNIC GROUP		
	White %	Black %	Other %
Improve level of education	55	71	58
Strengthen religious/spiritual ties	54	70	60
Get a better place to live	40	51	48
Start a different occupation	28	47	33
Move to a better neighborhood	22	38	31
Have or adopt a child	18	29	25
Get married	16	32	15
Find affordable/quality child care	14	28	19
Number of respondents	(1476)	(159)	(133)

Family Satisfaction plays a secondary role in determining ways to improve family life. This suggests that no matter how satisfied one is with their family life, there is always room for improvement. The strongest differences between **Very Satisfied** and **Least Satisfied** types relate to **starting a different occupation** and **taking separate vacations.** (See Table 8.8.)

TABLE 8.8: Which of the following would you like to do in the next five years for the betterment of your family life?

BY FAMILY SATISFACTION INDEX

	Very Satisfied %	Moderately Satisfied %	Least Satisfied %
Get a better place to live	34	42	43
Start a different occupation	20	28	36
Move to a better neighborhood	17	23	28
Take separate vacations	10	17	23
Number of respondents	(362)	(330)	(352)

Household Family Orientation also has relatively little impact on desired means to improve family life. Those with a **Dominant Family Orientation** are no more inclined than others to hope to develop stronger relations with family members or improve their level of education, the most popular choices. They are, however, along with those with a **Positive Orientation**, somewhat more inclined to strengthen religious or spiritual ties. Those with a **Subordinate Family Orientation** on the other hand, are somewhat more likely to want to get married. (See Table 8.9.)

TABLE 8.9: Which of the following would you like to do in the next five years for the betterment of your family life?

BY HOUSEHOLD FAMILY ORIENTATION INDEX

	Dominant %	Positive %	Subordinate %
Strengthen religious/spiritual ties	57	60	47
Get married	8	14	23
Number of respondents	(627)	(513)	(350)

Conclusions

Throughout the survey, respondents emphasize the importance of family in their lives. People value family time and would like more of it. Yet problems do exist in many American families. Personality conflicts and money worries are the two factors that most often disrupt family harmony. However, the issues on people's minds today are not necessarily the ones popular commentators choose to call attention to. Concern for an aging relative is far more prominent than the expectation of marital problems or serious parent-child difficulties.

People also recognize that there is always room for improvement, and few people do not want to better their family life. In fact, this explicitly stated desire to strengthen family relationships may be a sure indication that the state of the American family is

a healthy one. Despite changing family structures and despite the growing number of economic and sociological pressures that strain family ties, people have retained the desire to keep the family unit a prominent force in their lives.

PART FOUR:

FAMILY VIEWS AND VALUES

CHAPTER NINE: THE ROLE OF THE FAMILY

Sociologists differ on what the impact of recent trends in the family's evolution will be. While some see them as breeding insecurity and a diminishing of order, others view them as a progressive movement toward greater individual fulfillment that will eventually lead to a higher proportion of healthy families.

Traditionally the family unit has been viewed not only as the focal point in the individual's life, but also as vital for the well-being of society. It was the family that helped instill basic human values into the individual so that he or she could become a healthy, productive member of society. Today schools and other entities carry out some of the responsibilities that formerly belonged to the family. But has that really changed the importance of the family unit to society's well-being? How do people today define family and what do they see as its major function?

Continuation of Family's Role

Just as family continues to play a strong role in people's lives individually, it continues to be a critical component of society. The vast majority of Americans firmly believe the stability of the family affects the well-being of the world at large. The importance of the family as a social unit is reaffirmed by the following statistics.

Better than four in five Americans (86%) strongly agree that **healthy and happy families help to make the world a better place in which to live.** A similarly large number (82%) strongly believe that **a family is a place where most basic values are instilled,** and seven in ten (69%) strongly agree that **the family is the place where people can learn how to relate to the rest of society.** (See Table 9.1.)

While endorsing the importance of the family unit in society, however, Americans have acquired a flexibility when it comes to defining what family consists of. Three-quarters (74%) strongly believe the family to be **a group in which people are accepted for who they are,** and half (51%) the public strongly believe a family is any group of people who consider themselves a family unit. This shows a relatively flexible definition of what constitutes a family. Interestingly, none of the demographic variables affect the responses to this question.

Another issue raised in this section reflects the sense that people do not spend enough time relaxing with their family. Half (53%) of the public feels strongly that Americans in general short-change their families (and themselves) when it comes to spending leisure time with them. This, of course, correlates to the fact that most people choose to spend the bulk of their leisure time with family members.

Overall this table supports the theory that most Americans have a keen sense of the vital role of family in our society.

TABLE 9.1: Please tell me if you agree or disagree with the following statements:

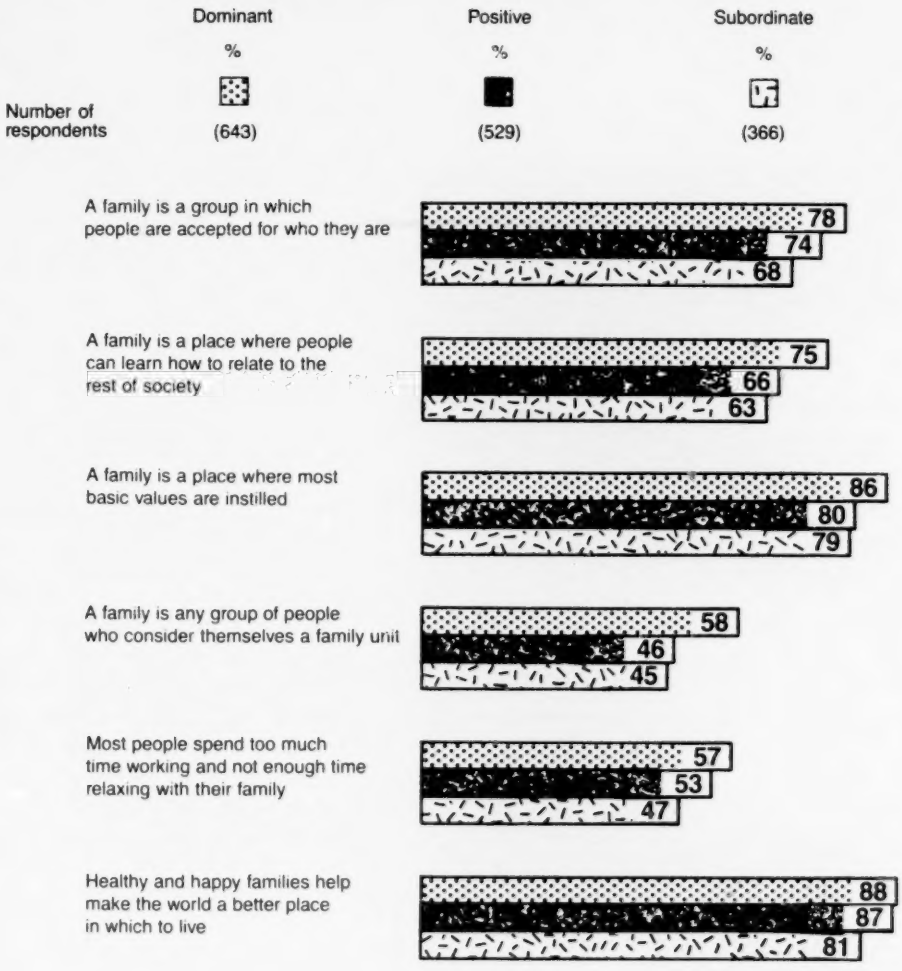
	Agree Strongly %	Agree Somewhat %	Disagree Somewhat %	Disagree Strongly %	No Opinion %
A family is a group in which people are accepted for who they are	74	21	3	2	1
A family is a place where people can learn how to relate to the rest of society	69	26	3	2	1
A family is a place where most basic values are instilled	82	16	1	1	2
A family is any group of people who consider themselves a family unit	50	30	11	6	3
Most people spend too much time working and not enough time relaxing with their family	52	34	9	3	3
Healthy and happy families help to make the world a better place in which to live	85	12	1	1	0
Number of respondents (2000)					

How people define the family and view its various roles are strongly affected by their own household family orientation. In general, those with a **Subordinate Family Orientation** are less likely to agree strongly with most of these statements than those with a **Dominant Family Orientation.** At the same time, the table

demonstrates a pervasive belief in the family as a positive force in society, even among those not oriented toward their own family. This is most striking in terms of the statement, "Healthy and happy families make the world a better place in which to live." Eight in ten (81%) of those with a **Subordinate Orientation** agree strongly with this. (See Table 9.2.)

TABLE 9.2: Those who agree strongly with the following statements:

BY HOUSEHOLD FAMILY ORIENTATION INDEX



Family Satisfaction also affects some basic attitudes toward the role of family in society, particularly the idea that a family is a place where people can learn to relate to the rest of society. (See Table 9.3.) But in general, **Household Family Orientation** appears to exercise a more consistent impact.

Taken together, the combined effect of both indices demonstrates that a person's own family experience plays a major role in showing his or her views on the basic roles and benefits of a family in society in general.

TABLE 9.3: Please tell me if you agree or disagree with the following statement: A family is a group in which people are accepted for who they are.

	BY FAMILY SATISFACTION INDEX		
	Very Satisfied %	Moderately Satisfied %	Least Satisfied %
Agree strongly	79	79	69
Agree somewhat	18	18	27
Disagree somewhat	2	2	3
Disagree strongly	2	1	2
Number of respondents	(415)	(352)	(373)

CHAPTER TEN: FAMILY VALUES AND NEEDS

Concern for the Elderly

While Americans today express strong opinions regarding many aspects of family life, they feel most strongly about **the real need for enhanced care for the elderly.** From a list of fourteen statements on a variety of family issues, Americans express the strongest support for the two statements concerning the elderly. This correlates with the finding that care for an elderly relative is a major concern on the minds of many Americans.

More than three in five (62%) people strongly agree that **more special communities and independent housing for the aged are needed.** Half (49%) also strongly agree that **the federal government should help finance long-term care for the elderly.** (See Table 10.1.)

TABLE 10.1: Please tell me if you agree or disagree with the following statements:

	Agree Strongly %	Agree Somewhat %	Disagree Somewhat %	Disagree Strongly %	No Answer/ Don't Know %
More special communities and independent housing for the aged are needed	62	26	5	3	4
The federal government should help finance long-term care of the elderly	49	33	10	5	3
Number of respondents	(2000)				

Women are more inclined than men to strongly agree with the need for this type of housing, as are those with less education, older people, blacks, and those in lower income groups. (See Table 10.2.)

TABLE 10.2: THOSE WHO AGREE STRONGLY MORE SPECIAL COMMUNITIES AND INDEPENDENT HOUSING FOR THE AGED ARE NEEDED

	%	Number of Respondents
BY GENDER		
Male	58	(920)
Female	70	(996)

	%	Number of Respondents
BY EDUCATION		
8th grade or less	77	(248)
Some high school	73	(273)
High school graduate	61	(742)
Some college	61	(330)
College graduate	57	(316)
BY AGE		
18 to 24	57	(312)
25 to 34	59	(477)
35 to 49	63	(447)
50 to 64	69	(373)
65 and over	74	(301)
BY ETHNIC GROUP		
White	63	(1602)
Black	73	(167)
Other	68	(142)
BY INCOME		
$10,000 or less	72	(337)
$10,001 to $15,000	66	(204)
$15,001 to $20,000	62	(265)
$20,001 to $30,000	63	(370)
$30,001 to $40,000	60	(236)
More than $40,000	62	(317)

Blacks, those who consider themselves political liberals, and those people with the least amount of education are the most inclined to strongly support federal aid. (See Table 10.3.)

TABLE 10.3: THOSE WHO AGREE STRONGLY THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT SHOULD HELP FINANCE LONG-TERM CARE OF THE ELDERLY

	Agree Strongly %	Number of Respondents
BY POLITICAL AFFILIATION		
Conservative	44	(702)
Moderate	48	(683)
Liberal	65	(309)
None	56	(232)
BY ETHNIC GROUP		
White	47	(1623)
Black	75	(167)
Other	65	(145)
BY EDUCATION		
8th grade or less	67	(258)
Some high school	60	(274)
High school graduate	52	(748)
Some college	38	(335)
College graduate	40	(318)

Marriage

The public also feels strongly about the institution of marriage. Half (48%) strongly believe **the schools should give instruction in how to prepare for marriage and parenthood.** Although this shows the public's belief in the importance of marriage, one wonders if it does not indicate that people are further dispensing to schools responsibilities that once belonged to the family.

Over half (56%) strongly disagree that **marriage is unnecessary unless there are children,** a further indication that the public believes marriage is important for its own sake. Americans also show themselves to be traditionalists by strongly rejecting (70%) **marriages between members of the same sex.** (See Table 10.4)

TABLE 10.4: Please tell me if you agree or disagree with the following statements:

	Agree Strongly %	Agree Somewhat %	Disagree Somewhat %	Disagree Strongly %	Don't Know/ No Answer %
Marriage is unnecessary unless there are children	7	10	25	56	3
Instruction in how to prepare for marriage and parenthood should be taught in school	48	31	10	9	2
Marriages with members of the same sex should be legalized	4	7	12	70	6
Divorce is a reasonable way to deal with marital problems	11	23	21	41	3
Number of respondents (2000)					

Not only do most families say it is very unlikely they will face divorce in the near future, but a plurality of Americans (41%) strongly disagree that **divorce is a reasonable way to deal with marital problems.** A third (34%) do accept divorce as a solution, but most of these people do not do so enthusiastically. Surprisingly, younger people are the most adamantly opposed to divorce. Over half (53%) of those between the ages of 18 and 24 strongly disagree with this option, compared with 39% of those between the ages of 35 and 49 and 33% of those 65 or older. Dual-career families and traditional families are equally opposed to divorce as a solution to marital problems. (See Table 10.5.)

TABLE 10.5: THOSE WHO DISAGREE STRONGLY THAT DIVORCES ARE A REASONABLE WAY TO DEAL WITH MARITAL PROBLEMS

	Disagree Strongly %	Number of Respondents
BY AGE		
18 to 24	53	(316)
25 to 34	41	(480)
35 to 49	39	(458)
50 to 64	46	(372)
65 and over	34	(298)
BY FAMILY STRUCTURE		
Dual-career with children	49	(258)
Single parent with children	42	(133)
Traditional family	47	(348)

Coexistent with the belief in the importance of marriage is the growing acceptance of the single lifestyle. Surprisingly few people, only a quarter (28%) of the population, agree that being single is not a fully acceptable lifestyle, while a plurality of people (40%) strongly indicate acceptance. Older people and those with less education are more inclined to reject the single lifestyle. (See Tables 10.6 and 10.7.)

TABLE 10.6: Please tell me if you agree or disagree with the following statement:

	Agree Strongly %	Agree Somewhat %	Disagree Somewhat %	Disagree Strongly %	Don't Know/ No Answer %
Being single is not a fully acceptable lifestyle	12	16	28	40	4

Number of respondents (2000)

TABLE 10.7: THOSE WHO DISAGREE STRONGLY WITH THE STATEMENT THAT BEING SINGLE IS NOT A FULLY ACCEPTABLE LIFESTYLE

	Disagree Strongly %	Number of Respondents %
BY AGE		
18 to 24	48	(321)
25 to 34	47	(480)
35 to 49	45	(461)
50 to 64	31	(356)
65 and over	30	(299)
BY EDUCATION		
8th grade or less	32	(246)
Some high school	37	(266)
High school graduate	40	(752)
Some college	47	(335)
College graduate	49	(320)

Having Children

Despite the growing number of childless couples and the increasing postponement of childbearing, most people do not indicate a disinclination to have children. Only one in five (20%) believe having children is too limiting. Nearly half (47%) of the public strongly reject this notion. (See Table 10.8.)

TABLE 10.8: Please tell me if you agree or disagree with the following statements:

	Agree Strongly	Agree Somewhat	Disagree Somewhat	Disagree Strongly	Don't Know/ No Answer
	%	%	%	%	%
Having children is too limiting	5	15	28	47	5
When medical technology allows, parents should be able to choose the sex of their child	9	18	20	49	5
The federal government should not help the children of disadvantaged families	6	9	27	55	4
Because of overpopulation concerns, people should have small families	25	28	22	20	6
Grown children should live near their parents	8	22	41	25	4
Abortions should be readily available and legal for all women	25	21	13	37	5
Number of respondents (2000)					

And Americans prove themselves to be a people concerned about the lot of the underprivileged child. Only 15% of the general public believe the federal government should not help the children of disadvantaged families. Over half (55%) of our sample strongly disagree with this attitude.

People also react strongly to the notion of selecting a child's sex. Although many revolutionary technologies have come to be accepted in recent years, half (49%) of the sample strongly disagree with parents choosing the sex of their child when medical technology permits.

There are a few issues on which the public finds itself fairly equally divided. One such issue is whether or not people should have small families because of overpopulation concerns. A quarter (25%) strongly agree, a fifth (20%) strongly disagree, and the rest fall in the middle. Surprisingly, older people are more likely to support small families on this basis. (See Table 10.9.)

TABLE 10.9: Please tell me if you agree or disagree with the following statement: Because of overpopulation concerns, people should have small families.

BY AGE

	18 to 24 %	25 to 34 %	35 to 49 %	50 to 64 %	65 and Over %
Agree strongly	18	24	26	29	37
Agree somewhat	25	30	32	33	30
Disagree somewhat	29	24	23	20	19
Disagree strongly	27	22	20	19	15
Number of respondents	(318)	(473)	(449)	(354)	(284)

In the past, there was a greater expectation that children live closer to their parents than currently exists. In fact, people today are extremely accepting of modern-day mobility. Two-thirds (66%) of the public **do not feel it important that children live close to their parents.** Parents in traditional families are not more inclined to wish their children live nearby than other types of parents.

Abortion remains a highly controversial issue. Respondents are divided on whether abortion should be readily available and legal for all women. Half (50%) disagree that abortion should be readily available and nearly half (46%) agree, but a greater

number of those who disagree feel strongly about the issue. As one might expect, a variety of demographic factors affect attitudes toward abortion. Those with more education, those who are single or divorced, and those who consider themselves political liberals are more likely to strongly agree that abortion should be available to all women. (See Table 10.10.)

TABLE 10.10: THOSE WHO AGREE STRONGLY ABORTION SHOULD BE READILY AVAILABLE AND LEGAL FOR ALL WOMEN

	Agree Strongly %	Number of Respondents
BY EDUCATION		
8th grade or less	18	(261)
Some high school	20	(284)
High school graduate	22	(772)
Some college	32	(345)
College graduate	40	(328)
BY MARITAL STATUS		
Married	22	(1202)
Separated/Divorced	35	(164)
Single	35	(429)
Widowed	24	(202)

	Agree Strongly %	Number of Respondents
BY POLITICAL AFFILIATION		
Conservative	23	(731)
Moderate	25	(695)
Liberal	37	(318)
None	26	(239)

The Role of the Indices in Shaping Attitudes

Household Family Orientation plays only a modest role in shaping attitudes toward the majority of these questions. In most cases, the differences can be seen on the negative rather than positive side. For example, those with a **Dominant Family Orientation** are more likely to rule out divorce as a reasonable means of dealing with marital problems than members of the **Subordinate** group.

On two issues, however, household closeness does demonstrate a strong impact on agreement: abortion and needs of the elderly. Those with a **Subordinate Family Orientation** are more likely to embrace legalized abortion than those with a **Dominant Orientation**, while the latter appear to be more sympathetic to the needs for special communities and independent housing for the aged. (See Tables 10.11 and 10.12.)

TABLE 10.11: THOSE WHO AGREE STRONGLY WITH THE FOLLOWING STATEMENTS:

BY HOUSEHOLD FAMILY ORIENTATION INDEX

	Dominant %	Positive %	Subordinate %
Abortions should be readily available and legal for all women	42	43	27
When medical technology allows, parents should be able to choose the sex of their child	55	49	45
Having children is too limiting	52	53	42
Divorce is a reasonable way to deal with marital problem	48	46	37
Number of respondents	(635)	(520)	(360)

TABLE 10.12: THOSE WHO AGREE STRONGLY WITH THE FOLLOWING STATEMENT:

BY HOUSEHOLD FAMILY ORIENTATION INDEX

	Dominant %	Positive %	Subordinate %
More special communities and independent housing for the aged are needed	67	62	55
Number of respondents	(635)	(520)	(360)

Family Satisfaction also has a strong impact on only a few of these issues. Those **Very Satisfied** are far more likely to strongly reject the statements that "Marriage without children is unnecessary," "Having children is too limiting," and "Divorce is a reasonable way to deal with martial problems" than **those who are Least Satisfied.** (See Table 10.13.)

TABLE 10.13: THOSE WHO DISAGREE STRONGLY WITH THE FOLLOWING

BY FAMILY SATISFACTION INDEX

	Very Satisfied %	Moderately Satisfied %	Least Satisfied %
Marriage without children is unnecessary	62	60	47
Having children is too limiting	58	51	41
Divorce is a reasonable way to deal with marital problems	49	48	36
Number of respondents	(415)	(352)	(373)

Parenting Today

American parents with children at home express a high degree of confidence in the way they are raising their children. Nearly two-thirds (64%) of these parents say they are very confident about the way they are raising their offspring, and an additional third (31%) describe themselves as confident. (See Table 10.14.)

TABLE 10.14: How confident are you about the way you are raising your children?

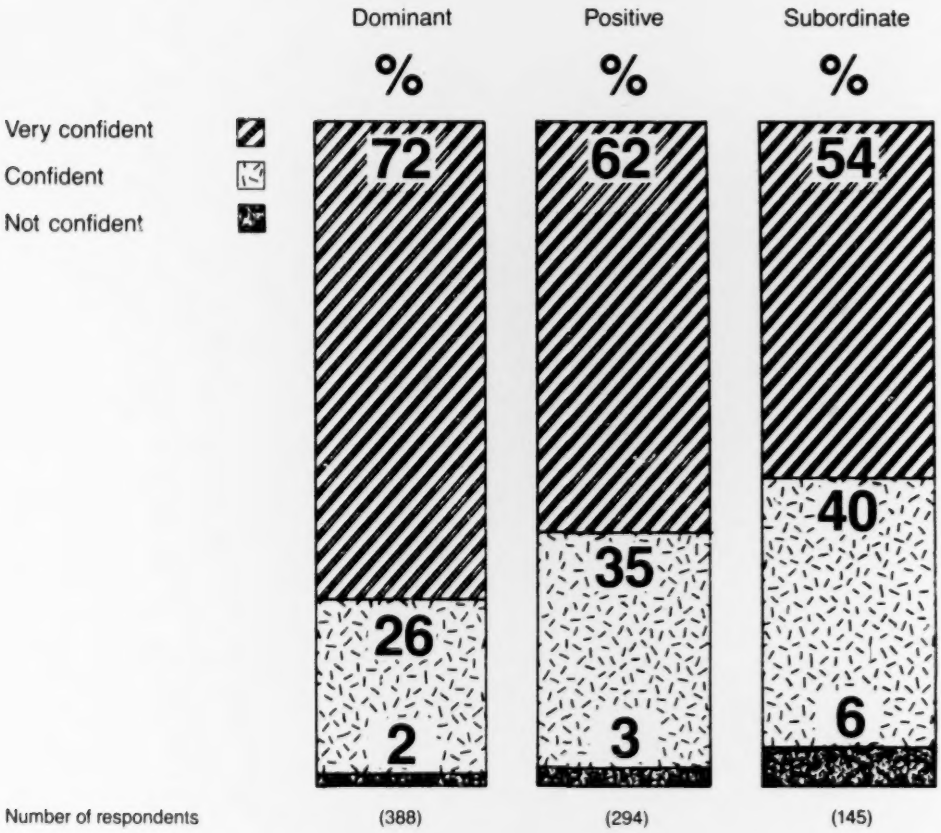
	%
Very confident	64
Confident	31
Not too confident	2
Not at all confident	*
Number of respondents	(877)

* Indices less than .5%

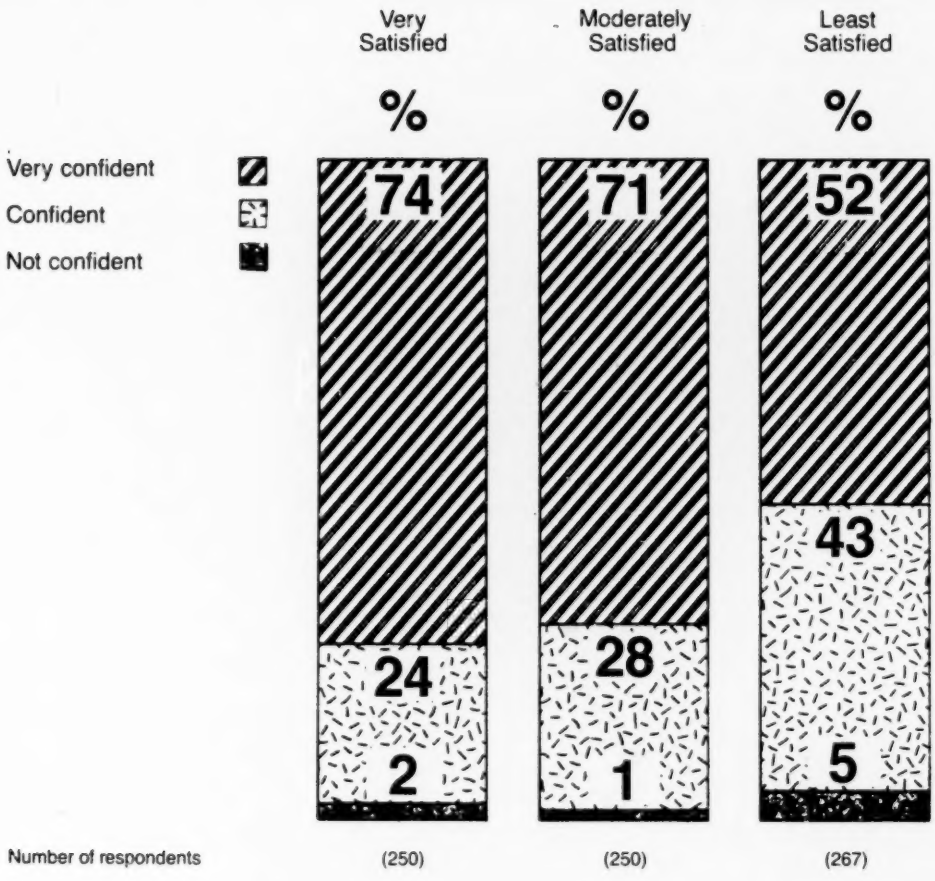
Parents with the closest knit households express the greatest degree of confidence in their childrearing. Nearly three in four (72%) of those with a **Dominant Family Orientation** say they are very confident about the way they are raising their children, compared to little more than half (54%) of the **Subordinate** group. (See Table 10.15.)

TABLE 10.15: How confident are you about the way you are raising your children?

BY HOUSEHOLD FAMILY ORIENTATION INDEX



BY FAMILY SATISFACTION INDEX



Family Satisfaction has a similarly large impact on confidence levels. Three-quarters (74%) of the **Very Satisfied** express the most confidence with their childrearing, compared to less than (43%) of the **Least Satisfied**.

On the other hand, dual-career family parents, single parents, and traditional family parents express an equal amount of confidence in the way they are raising their children.

In revealing some of their views on childrearing, Americans support some nontraditional as well as traditional views. A surprisingly large number of Americans indicate that they believe **fathers have as important a role to play in childrearing as mothers.** Seven in ten (69%) Americans agree strongly it is important for fathers to spend as much time with their children as mothers do, and an additional 20% agree about this to some extent. This issue elicited more support than any of the other parent/child issues raised in this section. Young people are the most inclined to strongly take this point of view. Interestingly, there are no differences among family types. Traditional families are just as much in favor of fathers taking an active role in the rearing of children. (See Tables 10.16 and 10.17.)

As mentioned in Part Four of this report, attitudes toward single people have significantly changed over the past few decades.

decades. This new more tolerant attitude toward singles is reflected in the public's growing acceptance of single parents. Seven in ten American (69%) agree that single adults can do a good job of raising children, although only a third (33%) agree strongly with this attitude. Women, those who are unmarried, and younger people are the most likely to feel strongly about this issue. (See Tables 10.16 and 10.18.)

While professing these "progressive" views, however, the public takes a more traditional view of motherhood. Half (49%) of the general public strongly believe that mothers with young children should go to work only if the money is really needed. Only a quarter (24%) believe otherwise. People with less education, older people, and those in the lower-income groups are the most likely to strongly agree that only financial considerations should impel these mothers to work. Parents in dual-career families are only somewhat less inclined to believe mothers with young children should not work unless the money is really needed, and, interestingly, women are not any more inclined than men to support the career aspirations of these mothers. (See Tables 10.16 and 10.19.)

Only a minority of Americans express strong sympathy for a woman's sometimes difficult choice between career and family. About a quarter (27%) of the public strongly agree that mothers with young children face an unfair choice between family

responsibilities and career goals. Another third (33%) agree less strongly that this choice is unfair. (See Table 10.17.)

Four in ten (39%) people also strongly agree that children can benefit by attending a well-supervised day care facility. Blacks agree more strongly than whites on this issue, as do those who consider themselves to be political liberals. (See Tables 10.16 and 10.20.)

TABLE 10.16: Please tell me if you agree or disagree with the following statements:

	Agree Strongly		Agree Somewhat	Disagree Somewhat	Disagree Strongly	Don't Know/ No Answer
	%		%	%	%	%
It is important for fathers to spend as much time with their children as mothers do	69	—89—	20	7	2	1
Mothers with young children should go to work only if the money is really needed	49	—73—	24	13	11	2
Children can benefit by attending a well-supervised daycare facility	39	—78—	39	8	8	5
Single adults can do a good job of raising children	33	—69—	36	14	14	4
Mothers with young children face an unfair choice between family responsibilities and career goals	27	—60—	33	14	13	8
Number of respondents	(2000)					

TABLE 10.17: Please tell me if you agree or disagree with the following statement: It is important for fathers to spend as much time with their children as mothers do.

	BY AGE				
	18 to 24 %	25 to 34 %	35 to 49 %	50 to 64 %	65 and Over %
Agree strongly	77	77	69	66	58
Agree somewhat	18	17	21	23	27
Disagree somewhat	4	5	8	9	12
Disagree strongly	2	1	2	3	3
Number of respondents	(320)	(487)	(465)	(383)	(315)

TABLE 10.18: THOSE WHO AGREE STRONGLY THAT SINGLE PARENTS CAN DO A GOOD JOB OF RAISING CHILDREN

	Agree Strongly %	Number of Respondents
BY GENDER		
Male	27	(922)
Female	40	(992)
BY MARITAL STATUS		
Married	29	(1152)
Separated/Divorced	45	(157)
Single	44	(415)
Widowed	34	(189)

	Agree Strongly %	Number of Respondents
BY AGE		
18 to 24	41	(316)
25 to 34	36	(482)
35 to 49	39	(452)
50 to 64	28	(362)
65 and over	23	(293)

TABLE 10.19: THOSE WHO AGREE STRONGLY THAT MOTHERS WITHOUT YOUNG CHILDREN SHOULD GO TO WORK ONLY IF THE MONEY IS REALLY NEEDED

	Agree Strongly %	Number of Respondents
BY EDUCATION		
8th grade or less	71	(261)
Some high school	55	(281)
High school graduate	51	(758)
Some college	40	(335)
College graduate	37	(321)
BY AGE		
18 to 24	37	(319)
25 to 34	39	(482)
35 to 49	48	(464)
50 to 64	65	(375)
65 and over	64	(313)

	Agree Strongly %	Number of Respondents
BY INCOME		
$10,000 or less	61	(348)
$10,001 to $15,000	58	(209)
$15,001 to $20,000	44	(270)
$20,001 to $30,000	49	(372)
$30,001 to $40,000	41	(246)
More than $40,000	40	(319)
BY FAMILY STRUCTURE		
Dual-career with children	43	(261)
Single parent with children	50	(137)
Traditional family	52	(353)

TABLE 10.20: THOSE WHO AGREE STRONGLY THAT CHILDREN CAN BENEFIT BY ATTENDING A WELL-SUPERVISED DAY CARE FACILITY

	Agree Strongly %	Number of Respondents
BY ETHNIC GROUP		
White	40	(1573)
Black	63	(168)
Other	35	(142)
BY POLITICAL AFFILIATION		
Conservative	37	(687)
Moderate	42	(660)
Liberal	50	(302)
None	45	(226)

As we have already seen, caring for the elderly is an issue which many Americans feel strongly about. Four in ten people (41%) strongly agree that grown children should never place an elderly parent in a nursing home as long as they are physically able to care for the parent at home. People with less education, those in the lower-income groups, and black families are the most likely to strongly agree that children should not place an elderly parent in a nursing home. (See Tables 10.21 and 10.22.)

While agreeing with a child's responsibility to care for aging parents, a majority of Americans also agree that for many families this is a financial burden. A third (32%) stongly agree that this can be a burden, and another 36% agree somewhat. Younger people and blacks are the least likely to describe caring for the elderly as a financial burden. (See Tables 10.21 and 10.23.)

TABLE 10.21: Please tell me if you agree or disagree with the following statements:

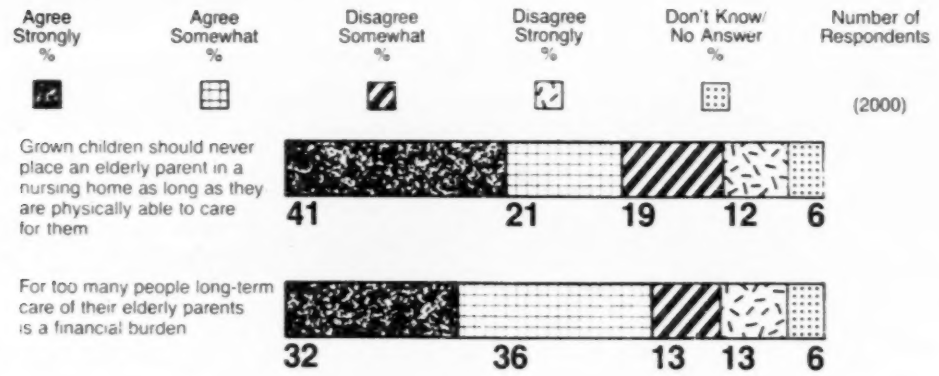


TABLE 10.22: THOSE WHO AGREE STRONGLY THAT GROWN CHILDREN SHOULD NEVER PLACE AN ELDERLY PARENT IN A NURSING HOME AS LONG AS THEY ARE PHYSICALLY ABLE TO CARE FOR THEM

	Agree Strongly %	Number of Respondents
BY EDUCATION		
8th grade or less	57	(242)
Some high school	56	(263)
High school graduate	46	(725)
Some college	36	(322)
College graduate	28	(312)
BY INCOME		
$10,000 or less	56	(332)
$10,001 to $15,000	46	(198)
$15,000 to $20,000	45	(257)
$20,001 to $30,000	39	(357)
$30,001 to $40,000	39	(231)
More than $40,000	30	(311)
BY ETHNIC GROUP		
White	42	(1555)
Black	58	(166)
Other	55	(144)

TABLE 10.23: THOSE WHO DISAGREE STRONGLY THAT FOR TOO MANY PEOPLE LONG-TERM CARE OF THEIR ELDERLY PARENTS IS A FINANCIAL BURDEN

	Agree Strongly %	Number of Respondents
BY AGE		
18 to 24	38	(314)
25 to 34	28	(457)
33 to 49	21	(448)
50 TO 64	31	(365)
65 and over	26	(293)
BY ETHNIC GROUP		
White	25	(1572)
Black	54	(160)
Other	35	(146)

Consistent with changing attitudes toward family size, only a minority of Americans feel strongly that an only child is at a disadvantage. Approximately a quarter (27%) of the sample strongly express this attitude.

Finally, a majority (54%) of Americans do not believe homosexuals can do a good job of raising children. It should be noted, however, that a large number (21%) have no opinion and a full

quarter (25%) of the sample do believe homosexuals can make good parents. (See Table 10.24.)

TABLE 10.24: Please tell me if you agree or disagree with the following statements:

	Agree Strongly %	Agree Somewhat %	Disagree Somewhat %	Disagree Strongly %	Don't Know/ No Answer %	Number of Respondents
An only child is at a disadvantage	27	28	23	18	4	(1926)
Homosexuals can do a good job of raising children	7	18	11	43	21	(1577)

Interestingly, neither **Household Family Orientation** nor **Family Satisfaction** which a respondent may experience in his own home has any impact on his or her opinions about almost all these issues. The one exception relates to the prohibition against placing elderly parents in nursing homes unless absolutely necessary. Half (50%) of those with a **Dominant Family Orientation** strongly agree that grown children should never place their parents in a nursing home, compared to about a third (36%) of those with a **Subordinate Family Orientation.** The **Very Satisfied** are also more reluctant than the **Least Satisfied** to place an elderly parent in a nursing home. (See Table 10.25.)

TABLE 10.25: Please tell me if you agree or disagree with the following statement: Grown children should never place an elderly parent in a nursing home as long as they are physically able to care for them.

BY HOUSEHOLD FAMILY ORIENTATION

	Dominant %	Positive %	Subordinate %
Agree strongly	50	43	36
Agree somewhat	20	24	26
Disagree somewhat	17	22	27
Disagree strongly	13	11	11
Number of respondents	(619)	(502)	(353)

BY FAMILY SATISFACTION INDEX

	Very Satisfied %	Moderately Satisfied %	Least Satisfied %
Agree strongly	45	40	34
Agree somewhat	22	19	23
Disagree somewhat	19	24	28
Disagree strongly	13	11	15
Number of respondents	(390)	(323)	(343)

CHAPTER ELEVEN: THE FUTURE OF THE AMERICAN FAMILY

Predicting Future Trends

In certain areas Americans have shown a change in attitudes regarding family issues. But what changes do Americans foresee taking place in the family over the coming decades? Do they envision an eroding or strengthening of family ties?

In response to these inquiries, Americans predict a number of trends. A large majority (77%) of Americans expect family units consisting of two parents and their children to increasingly grow important during the next twenty years. At the same time, however, Americans predict there will be an increasing number of nontraditional family units such as single parents and unmarried couples (78%) and that more and more people will live alone or in non-family households (78%). Perhaps most startling of all, a large majority of people (76%) predict that in the future most married people will be divorced at least once. (See Table 11.1.)

Americans also predict a trend toward closer relationships with non-household family members (60%), but they do not see easy solutions to the problems of the elderly. A majority (59%) expect to see the increasing isolation of elderly family members from the rest of the family.

Despite these changes most people do not believe the family will decrease in importance. Only half of the public believe family units will become less important in our society (48%) or that members of different generations will find it harder to relate to one another (52%).

TABLE 11.1: Thinking of the next twenty years, how likely do you consider each of the following?

	Very Likely %	Somewhat Likely %	Not Very Likely %	Not at all Likely %	Don't Know/ No Answer %
Family units consisting of two parents and their children will increasingly grow in importance	38 — 77 — 39		15	3	5
Family units of single parents, unmarried couples, couples without children, and couples of the same sex will become increasingly more common	40 — 78 — 38		13	5	5
More and more people will live alone or in non-family households such as with roommates	36 — 78 — 42		12	3	7
Most married people will be divorced at least once	40 — 76 — 36		15	5	4
Family units of all kinds will become less and less important in our society	22 — 48 — 26		33	16	4
Elderly family members will be more and more isolated from other family members	28 — 61 — 31		27	10	4
Ties among family members not living in the same household will become closer	23 — 60 — 37		28	6	5
Members of different generations will find it harder and harder to relate or speak to each other	23 — 52 — 29		31	13	4
Number of respondents (2000)					

Family Satisfaction affects views of many of the scenarios for the future of the family, especially the strengthening (or weakening) of particular family ties, and the rise in the incidence of divorce. **Very Satisfied** family members are much more inclined to see the growth in importance of the traditional nuclear family unit as very likely (54%) than **Not Very Satisfied** respondents. (See Table 11.2.)

TABLE 11.2: THOSE WHO BELIEVE IT IS VERY LIKELY THAT OVER THE NEXT TWENTY YEARS THE FOLLOWING WILL HAPPEN:

	BY SATISFACTION INDEX		
	Very Satisfied %	Moderately Satisfied %	Least Satisfied %
Family units consisting of two parents and their children will increasingly grow in importance	54	40	32
Most married people will be divorced at least once	40	39	46
Elderly family members will be more and more isolated from other family members	25	27	29
Ties among family members not living in the same household will become closer	33	26	20
Members of different generations will find it harder and harder to relate or speak to each other	22	26	24
Number of respondents	(415)	(352)	(373)

With two exceptions, an individual's own **Household Family Orientation** has no impact on a person's outlook on the future of the American family. Those with **Dominant, Positive,** and **Subordinate Family Orientations** all tend to see the future in the same terms, despite differences in their own personal experiences.

The two exceptions relate to the likelihood of strengthening bonds between family members not living in the same household, and the growth of the traditional family. Those with a **Dominant Orientation** are more optimistic than members of the Subordinate group that either of these things will happen. Two-thirds (67%) of those with a **Dominant Orientation** consider the strengthening of family ties very likely, compared to 57% of those with a **Subordinate Orientation.** Members of this group are even less sanguine about the growth potential of the traditional nuclear family, with only a third (33%) considering it very likely, compared to nearly half (47%) of those with a **Dominant Orientation.** (See Table 11.3.)

TABLE 11.3: THOSE WHO BELIEVE IT IS VERY LIKELY THE FOLLOWING WILL HAPPEN OVER THE NEXT TWENTY YEARS:

BY HOUSEHOLD FAMILY ORIENTATION INDEX

	Dominant %	Positive %	Subordinate %
Ties among family members not living in the same household will become closer	27	26	17
Family units consisting of two parents and their children will increasingly grow in importance	47	36	33
Number of respondents	(664)	(544)	(371)

Level of education and ethnic background also have some bearing on how a respondent foresees the future of the family. Black respondents, those with less formal education, and single parents are more inclined to believe that most married people will be divorced at least once. Blacks are more likely to predict that ties among non-household family members will become closer, and that elderly family members will be more isolated in the future. (See Tables 11.4 and 11.5.)

TABLE 11.4: THOSE WHO THINK IT VERY LIKELY OVER THE NEXT TWENTY YEARS THAT MOST MARRIED PEOPLE WILL BE DIVORCED AT LEAST ONCE

	Very Likely %	Number of Respondents
BY EDUCATION		
8th grade or less	53	(246)
Some high school	42	(269)
High school graduate	44	(752)
Some college	37	(334)
College graduate	30	(317)
BY ETHNIC GROUP		
White	39	(1607)
Black	59	(165)
Other	49	(146)
BY FAMILY STRUCTURE		
Dual-career with children	42	(261)
Single parent with children	47	(1281)
Traditional family	37	(345)

TABLE 11.5: THOSE WHO THINK IT IS VERY LIKELY THE FOLLOWING WILL HAPPEN OVER THE NEXT TWENTY YEARS:

BY ETHNIC GROUP

	White %	Black %	Other %
Ties among family members not living together in the same household will become closer	24	36	24
Elderly family members will be more and more isolated from other family members	28	44	32
Number of respondents	(1577)	(165)	(145)

Conclusions

Some contradictions seem to exist in the way Americans perceive the changing role of the family. While reluctant to let go of the ingrained ideal of the traditional family, Americans are growing to accept less traditional models and expect these to become more common in the future. One detects a general note of optimism regarding the future of the family. Not only will family units continue to be important, but ties with non-household family members will strengthen. A majority also predict that perhaps generations will drift further apart, suggesting that amid the general optimism there lurks a note of uncertainty.

METHODOLOGY

This report presents the findings of a telephone survey conducted among a randomly generated sample of 2,000 men and women, 18 years of age or older, living in private households in the continental United States.

Interviewing for the Ethan Allen Report: The Status and Future of the American Family was completed during the period from September 24, 1985 to November 9, 1985 by members of the Research & Forecasts interviewing staff. The length of interviews ranged from 25 to 45 minutes, with the average approximately 35 minutes.

As required by the Code of Standards of the Council of American Survey Research Organizations, we maintain the anonymity of our respondents. No information will be released that in any way will reveal the identity of a respondent.

In order to ensure accuracy of results, Research & Forecasts has exercised the most advanced methods in the preparation of this information. Research & Forecasts cannot, however, assume responsibility for any use which is made of this information or any decisions based upon it.

Quality Control Measures

Quality control measures were applied in every phase of preparation of this report:

- Interviewers are hired and trained in person, and their work is checked regularly for accuracy and validity.
- Interviewers who work on such surveys and interviewing supervisors are carefully briefed regarding the questionnaires and interviewing procedures.
- Since interviewing is conducted from a central location, the interviewers are monitored constantly.
- At least 10% of all interviewees are called back by survey supervisors to ensure that the questionnaires were filled out correctly.
- Questionnaires are prepared for data processing by experienced coders, under the supervision of the survey director.
- Data processing is subject to rigorous internal checks designed to detect both machine and human error.

Weighting

As is common practice in survey research, results were weighted to improve generalization of sample findings to the adult population as a whole. Accordingly, results were adjusted to account for sample variations in gender, race, age, education, and area of the country. The overall success of the weighting can be judged from the accompanying table. The final weighted sample matches Census figures very closely.

	Weighted %	Census %
Gender		
Male	47.9	47.6
Female	52.1	52.4
Race		
White	83.8	86.9
Nonwhite	16.2	13.1
Age		
18-24	16.2	17.8
25-34	24.6	23.3
35-49	23.7	23.2
50-64	19.4	19.8
65 and over	16.1	15.9
Education		
Eighth grade or less	13.1	13.6
Some high school	14.3	14.2
High school graduate	38.8	39.5
Some college	17.3	16.9
College graduate	16.5	15.8
Region		
Northeast	22.0	21.9
South	33.5	33.5
North central	25.3	25.2
West	19.4	19.4

Reliability of Survey Results

Results of any sample are subject to sampling variation. The magnitude of the variation is measurable and is affected by the number of interviews and the percentage distribution. The table below shows the possible sample variation that applies to percentage results reported in this report. The chances are 95 in 100 that an Ethan Allen Report percentage result does not vary--

plus or minus--by more than the indicated number of percentage points from the results that would be obtained if the interviews had been conducted with all persons in the universe represented by the sample.

Size of Sample on Which Survey Result Is Based	Approximate Sampling Tolerances Applicable to Percentages At or Near These Levels				
	50/50	60/40	70/30	80/20	90/10
100	10.0	9.8	9.2	8.0	6.0
300	5.8	5.7	5.3	4.6	3.5
500	4.5	4.4	4.1	3.6	2.7
800	3.5	3.5	3.2	2.8	2.1
1000	3.2	3.1	2.9	2.5	1.9
1500	2.5	2.5	2.3	2.0	1.5
2000	2.2	2.1	2.0	1.8	1.3

How to use this table: Find the intersection between the sample size and the approximate percentage distribution of the binomial in the sample. The number appearing at this intersection represents the estimated sampling error, at the 95% confidence level, expressed in percentage points (plus or minus).

Sampling

Respondents were reached by telephone from a sample of randomly generated telephone numbers provided by Survey Sampling, Inc., of Westport, Connecticut. Random digit dialing is the most widely used sampling technique in the United States. This method

provides an efficient, statistically valid way of obtaining representative samples of the general public at a reasonable cost.

Data Collection

Approximately 30 members of the Research & Forecasts data collection staff conducted interviews of the general public. Interviews took place on weeknights between the hours of 6:00 p.m. and 10:00 p.m. and on weekends from 10:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. After 8:30 p.m., only numbers from time zones other than the Eastern Standard Time zone were called.

In order to ensure that the respondents represented a random sample of United States residents, every effort was made to reach and complete an interview with a qualified respondent at each number. Interviewers made one initial call and at least three callbacks to each telephone number that had neither yielded a completed interview nor been disqualified.

Overall, interviewers achieved a sample response rate of 46%, comparable to the rates reported by other professionals in the field of survey research. A complete breakdown of the response rate follows:

Response Rate*

Completed Interviews	2000	(37%)
Nonresponse[1]	3451	(63%)
Refusals	2595	
Terminated interviews	153	
Callbacks	526	
Deaf/Language problems	177	
Total Potential Respondents	5455	(100%)
Excluded from Sample	2907	
Disconnected	1307	
Never answered[2]	1071	
Always busy[2]	186	
Business/Government	343	
Not qualified[3]	79	
Total Number of Calls	8362	

1. Nonresponses are calls during which the phone was answered at some point but interviews were not completed.

2. Lines that remained unanswered or busy for four consecutive attempts were assumed to be nonresidential numbers (phone booths, problem lines, businesses closed for the evening, etc.) and were excluded from response rate calculations.

3. Those who could not be interviewed because they were too young or were not residents of the household reached were classified as "Not qualified."

* The computation of response rates for this study conforms to guidelines set by the Council of American Survey Research Organizations (CASRO).

Creation of the Two Indices

The **Household Family Orientation Index** and the **Family Satisfaction Index** were both created by using a number of individual variables, each of which correlates strongly with the others. The following table shows the strength of these individual correlations, in terms of Pearson's r, for the three questions which form the basis of the **Household Family Orientation Index:**

	How important is spending time with your family?	How close is your family?
How important is your family?	.2563	.1734
How important is spending time with your family?		.3163

This index was established by ranking the responses to the three questions on a scale of 3 to 9, with 3 indicating a very strong family orientation and 9 a very weak one. The distribution of scores is as follows:

Score	Distribution %	Orientation
3	42	Dominant Family
4	34	Positive Family
5	14	Subordinate Family
6	6	
7	2	
8	1	
9	1	

For the **Family Satisfaction Index**, the same procedure was followed, involving six responses to the series of questions, "How satisfied are you with the following aspects of your life?" The following table presents the correlation coefficients (Pearson's r) for the six variables:

	SATISFACTION WITH RELATIONSHIP WITH:				
	Spouse	Children	Parents/ Relatives	Sex	Self
Satisfaction with relationship with:					
Spouse		.2463	.2577	.5513	.3232
Children			.2241	.2576	.3484
Parents/Relatives				.1136	.2210
Sex life					.3739

The responses were rated on a scale of 5 (high satisfaction) to 20 (very low satisfaction), but no single respondent received more than a score of 17. The scores were distributed as follows:

Score	Distribution %	Satisfaction
5	36	Very high
6	18	Moderate
7	13	
8	11	
9	7	
10	8	
11	2	
12	2	Low
13	1	
14	1	
15	*	
16	*	
17	*	

* indicates less than 1%

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QUESTIONNAIRE

Part One: Focus on the Household Family

1. What is the total number of people, including yourself, who make up your present household?

1(Lives alone)	[ ]GO TO 3a	5-6	[ ]
2	[ ]	7-9	[ ]
3-4	[ ]	10 or more	[ ]
		DK/NA	[ ]

2. Which family members do you live with? [Check all that apply] **DO NOT READ CHOICES**

Spouse	[ ]	Cousin(s)	[ ]
Intimate companion	[ ]	Nephew/niece	[ ]
Own Children	[ ]GO TO 3b	Uncle	[ ]
Step-children	[ ]GO TO 3b	Aunt	[ ]
Mother	[ ]	Grandparent(s)	[ ]
Father	[ ]	Greatgrandparent(s)	[ ]
Sister	[ ]	Grandchildren	[ ]
Brother	[ ]	In-laws	[ ]

Live with non-family members [ ]

Others (specify)_____

DK/NA [ ]

3a. Do you have children?

Yes [ ]GO TO 6

No [ ]GO TO 9

3b. **[ONLY THOSE WITH CHILDREN AT HOME]** How many children do you have <u>living at home</u> who are:

Under 2 years old	____
Between 2 and 6 years old	____
Between 6 and 18 years old	____
Over 18 years old	____
DK/NA	____

4. **[ONLY THOSE WITH CHILDREN AT HOME]** How much help do you or did you receive from parents, in-laws or other relatives in:

	A lot	Some	A little	None	DK/NA
Looking after these children	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
Meeting expenses in setting up a household (i.e., buying furniture, paying rent)	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
Meeting expenses of children's schooling or medical costs	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
Buying major items like a car or a house	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
Finding a job, getting started in business, or finishing school	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]

5. How confident are you about the way you are raising your children?

Very confident	[ ]
Confident	[ ]
Not too confident	[ ]
Not at all confident	[ ]
DK/NA	[ ]

6. **[RESPONDENTS WITH CHILDREN WHO DON'T LIVE AT HOME]** How many children do you have living away from home who are?

Under 2 years old	____	
Between 2 and 6 years old	____	
Between 6 and 18 years old	____	
Over 18 years old	____	
Have no children living away from home	____	GO TO 9
Don't know/No answer	____	

7. Thinking of your children who don't live with you, how often do you visit with them or speak to them on the phone?

Every day	[ ]
More than once a week	[ ]
About once a week	[ ]
A few times a month	[ ]
Once a month	[ ]
Less than once a month	[ ]
Never	[ ]
Don't know/No answer	[ ]

8. Do your grown children live: [Choose all that apply]

5 to 10 miles away from you	[ ]
20 to 100 miles away from you	[ ]
200 to 500 miles away from you	[ ]
Over 500 miles away from you	[ ]
DK/NA	[ ]

9. Where do your parent (s) live?

	Mother	Father
In private home or apartment	[ ]	[ ]
In independent housing for the elderly	[ ]	[ ]
In nursing home	[ ]	[ ]
With you	[ ]	[ ]
Deceased	[ ]	[ ]
Don't know/No answer	[ ]	[ ]

IMPORTANT:IF BOTH PARENTS ARE DECEASED OR LIVE WITH RESPONDENT, GO TO Q12. OTHERWISE, GO TO Q10

---

10. Do your parents live: [Choose all that apply]

5 to 10 miles away from you	[ ]
20 to 100 miles away from you	[ ]
200 to 500 miles away from you	[ ]
Over 500 miles away from you	[ ]
DK/NA	[ ]

11. How frequently do you visit with your parent(s) or speak to them on the phone?

Every day	[ ]
More than once a week	[ ]
About once a week	[ ]
A few times a month	[ ]
Once a month	[ ]
Less than once a month	[ ]
Never	[ ]
DK/NA	[ ]

IMPORTANT: IF RESPONDENT LIVES ALONE, SKIP TO Q25

12. How close do you consider your household family to be?

Very close	[ ]
Moderately close	[ ]
Not very close	[ ]
Not at all close	[ ]
DK/NA	[ ]

13. Which of the following best expresses your household situation?

It is closer now than ever before	[ ]	GO TO 14a
It is not as close as before	[ ]	GO TO 14b
It has always been this close	[ ]	GO TO 15
It has never been close	[ ]	GO TO 15
DK/NA	[ ]	GO TO 15

14a. What is the single most important factor affecting the increase in closeness at home?

_____

[GO TO Q15]

14b. What is the single most important factor affecting the decrease in closeness at home?

_____

15. How important to you is spending time with the family members you live with?

Very important	[ ]
Moderately important	[ ]
Not very important	[ ]
Not at all important	[ ]
Don't know/No answer	[ ]

16. Would you say:

You spend just about the right amount of time with your family	[ ]	GO TO 17a
You wish you had more time to spend with your family	[ ]	GO TO 17a
You wish you could spend less time with your family	[ ]	SKIP TO 18
DK/NA	[ ]	SKIP TO 18

17a. What changes in your career or job have you made in order to spend time with your family? **[CHECK ALL THAT APPLY]**

Work more at home [ ]

Reduce number of hours you work [ ]

Quit job [ ]

Suppress or delay job ambitions [ ]

Take a less challenging job that allows you time and flexibility for your family [ ]

Hire outside help [ ]

Other _____

Not applicable (doesn't work) [ ]

Made no changes [ ]

17b. What changes in your career or job would you be willing to make in order to spend more time with your family?

Work more at home [ ]

Reduce number of hours you work [ ]

Quit job [ ]

Supress or delay job ambitions [ ]

Take a less challenging job that allows you time and flexibility for your family [ ]

Hire outside help [ ]

Other _____

Not applicable (doesn't work) [ ]

Would make no changes [ ]

DK/NA [ ]

18. Which of the following are usually considered family times in your household? [CHECK ALL THAT APPLY]

Evenings [ ]

Dinnertime [ ]

Breakfast [ ]

Weekends [ ]

Holidays [ ]

Vacations [ ]

None [ ]

DK/NA [ ]

19. Do you and your family share at least one meal together every day?

Yes [ ]GO TO 20

No [ ]SKIP TO 21

DK/NA [ ]SKIP TO 21

20. Please tell me which one of the following best describes your family's experience at mealtime:

___ Relaxed mood but little conversation [ ]

___ Family shares ideas and daily experiences [ ]

___ Everyone argues [ ]

___ Everyone eats quickly and then leaves table in a hurry [ ]

___ Silence or strained conversation [ ]

___ Time when family problems are discussed [ ]

___ Attention focused on t.v., stereo or reading material [ ]

____Refused [ ]

21. How often does your whole household family get together to watch movies on a VCR or t.v. programs?

Very often	[ ]
Sometimes	[ ]
Not very often	[ ]
Never	[ ]SKIP TO 23
Don't have a t.v.	[ ]SKIP TO 23
Don't know/No answer	[ ]SKIP TO 23

22. In what room does your family most often watch t.v. together?

Living room	[ ]
Den/family room	[ ]
Bedroom	[ ]
Dining room	[ ]
Kitchen	[ ]
Don't know/No answer	[ ]

23. In what room do you and your household family spend most of your leisure time together?

Kitchen	[ ]
Living room	[ ]
Bedroom	[ ]
Den/Family room	[ ]
Dining room	[ ]
Other _____	
Don't know/No answer	[ ]

24. Do all family members have their own special place--a room or an area of a room in your house--which is primarily for their own use?

Yes	[ ]
No	[ ]
DK/NA	[ ]

25. Now I'd like to ask your opinion about some important issues concerning parents and children. Please tell me if you agree or disagree with the following statements. [Begin at checked item]

	Agree Strongly	Agree Somewhat	Disagree Somewhat	Disagree Strongly	No Opinion
___ An only child is at a disadvantage	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
___ Single adults can do a good job of raising children	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
___ Homosexuals can do a good job of raising children	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
___ Parents should sacrifice in order to give their children the best	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
___ Children have the right to have views different from those of their parents	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
___ Mothers with young children should go to work only if the money is really needed	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
___ Mothers with young children face an unfair choice between family responsibilities and career goals	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
___ Children can benefit by attending a well-supervised daycare facility	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
___ It is important for fathers to spend as much time with their children as mothers do	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
___ Parents should have their own lives and interests even if it means spending less time with their children	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
___ Grown children should never place an elderly parent in a nursing home as long as they are physically able to care for the parent at home	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
___ For too many people, long-term care of their elderly parents is a financial burden	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]

Part Two: Focus on the Non-Household Family

Now I would like to ask you about the other people in your family whom you do not live with.

26. Who are the people you consider to be your family whom you do not live with? **[CHECK ALL THAT APPLY; DO NOT READ CHOICES]**

Have no other family [ ]**SKIP TO 41**

Spouse	[ ]	Grandchildren	[ ]
Intimate companion	[ ]	Nephew/niece	[ ]
Own children	[ ]	Uncle	[ ]
Step-children	[ ]	Aunt	[ ]
Mother	[ ]	Grandparent(s)	[ ]
Father	[ ]	Greatgrandparent(s)	[ ]
Sister	[ ]	Cousin (s)	[ ]
Brother	[ ]	In-laws	[ ]

Other relatives (specify)_____

27. Would you say:

You spend just about the right amount of time with these family members [ ]

You wish you had more time to spend with these family members [ ]

You wish you could spend less time with your family [ ]

DK/NA [ ]

28. How often do most of these family members get together?

Daily	[ ]	Every two or three months	[ ]
Several times a week	[ ]	A few times a year	[ ]
At least once a week	[ ]	Once a year	[ ]
Several times a month	[ ]	Less than once a year	[ ]
At least once a month	[ ]	Never	[ ]
DK/NA	[ ]		

29. **What are the main occasions on which your entire family--those you live with and other family members--get together? [CHECK ALL THAT APPLY]**

Traditional holidays (Thanksgiving, major religious celebrations, etc.) [ ]

Special occasions (weddings, graduations, etc.) [ ]

Family reunions [ ]

Weekend meals or other activities [ ]

Whenever possible/no special reason [ ]

Illness or funerals [ ]

Other_____ [ ]

DK/NA [ ]

30. What is the one primary reason you attend these events? **[Select one; Begin with checked item]**

Everyone else goes [ ]

I enjoy spending time with my family [ ]

I don't want to hurt anyone's feelings [ ]

I very much value these family gatherings [ ]

I like to catch up on family affairs [ ]

It's an obligation [ ]

Other _____

DK/NA [ ]

31. Which of the following statements best describes how important your family is to you? [Choose one]

The most important element of my life at this time	[ ]
One of the most important elements, but not the most important	[ ]
A fairly important element of my life	[ ]
A fairly unimportant element of my life	[ ]
A very unimportant element of my life	[ ]
Don't know/No answer	[ ]

32. Which three items have the most positive effect on the quality of your family life? [Select only three]

Interaction between immediate and extended family members	[ ]
Religious beliefs, practices and organizations	[ ]
Neighbors and the surrounding community	[ ]
Radio, t.v. and movies	[ ]
Government programs serving family members	[ ]
Family service agencies	[ ]
Schools and educational programs	[ ]
Neighborhood and community organizations	[ ]
Your job	[ ]
None	[ ]
Don't know/No answer	[ ]

33. I'm going to read you a list of possible sources of conflict within the family. Please tell me if these cause conflicts in your family frequently, sometimes, rarely, or never.

	Frequently	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	Does Not Apply	Don't Know
___ Money	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
___ Unemployment	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
___ Your job	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
___ Spouse's job	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
___ Retirement	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
___ Housework	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
___ Child-rearing responsibilities	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
___ Child-rearing practices	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
___ Relationship among children	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
___ In-laws	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
___ Religion	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
___ Health problems	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
___ Care of elderly relatives	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
___ Step-families	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
___ Personality differences among family members	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
___ Lack of time together	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
___ Lack of privacy	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
___ Infidelity	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
___ Sexual problems	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
___ Physical abuse	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
___ Drug/alchohol abuse	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]

34. In the past year, who did you contact from time to time to discuss family-related problems? **[CHECK ALL THAT APPLY]**

___ Other family member (s) [ ]

___ Minister, priest or rabbi [ ]

___ Close friend [ ]

___ Family therapist/marriage counselor/psychiatrist [ ]

___ Teacher [ ]

___ Family physician [ ]

___ Other_____

___ No one [ ]
___ DK/NA [ ]

35. How likely is it that your family will face the following problems over the next five years? **[BEGIN AT CHECKED ITEM]**

	Very Likely	Somewhat Likely	Somewhat Unlikely	Very Unlikely	Don't Know
___ Serious health problems	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
___ Care for elderly relative	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
___ Divorce	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
___ Financial hardship	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
___ Marital problems	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
___ Parent-child problems	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
___ Environmental problems, such as contaminated water	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
___ Depression or loneliness	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
___ Alcohol or drug problems	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
___ Unemployment	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
___ Criminal charges against a family member	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
___ Death of a family member	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]

___ Loss of government services to families [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ]

36. Which of the following would you like to do in the next five years for the betterment of your family life? **[CHECK ALL THAT APPLY, BEGIN WITH CHECKED ITEM]**

___ Have or adopt a child [ ]

___ Get married [ ]

___ Develop a stronger relationship with parents, children, spouse or intimate companion [ ]

___ Get a divorce or separation [ ]

___ Be of more help to an elderly or ill family member [ ]

___ Find affordable and quality childcare [ ]

___ Take separate vacations from spouse/intimate companion or children [ ]

___ Strengthen religious or spiritual ties [ ]

___ Improve level of education [ ]

___ Start a different occupation [ ]

___ Get a bigger or better place to live [ ]

___ Move to a better neighborhood [ ]

37. Whom do you spend <u>most</u> of your leisure time with? (Check all that apply)

By yourself [ ]
Spouse or intimate companion [ ]
Own children [ ]
Children of spouse or intimate companion [ ]
Parents [ ]
In-laws [ ]
Other family members [ ]
Close friends [ ]
Business associates [ ]
Other _____
DK/NA [ ]

38. Of all the activities you do with a family member or members, which three do you enjoy the most?

_____
_____
_____

39. Which one of the following best describes the most important element of spending time with your family? [CHECK ONE]

Talking and sharing experiences	[ ]
Just being together	[ ]
Helping family members	[ ]
Learning from other family members	[ ]
Giving emotional support	[ ]
Other (specify) _____	[ ]
Don't know/No answer	[ ]

40. I'm going to read you a list of possible sources of conflict the time people spend with their families. How often do the following keep you from family activities?

	Frequently	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	Don't Know
___ Health problems	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
___ Money	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
___ Physical distance from family members	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
___ Conflict or disagreement about some issue	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
___ Work	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
___ Household duties	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
___ Old grievances and grudges	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
___ Lack of interest	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
___ None of these	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]

41. In general, how satisfied are you with the following areas of your life? **[BEGIN AT CHECKED ITEM]**

	Very Satisfied	Somewhat Satisfied	Somewhat Dissatsfied	Very Dissatisfied	Don't know No answer	Not Applicable
___ Your relationship with your spouse or intimate companion	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
___ Your relationship with parents or relatives	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
___ Your relationship with your friends	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
___ Your job	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
___ Your household work	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
___ Your relationship with your children	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
___ Your sex life	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
___ Your relationship with yourself	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
___ Your standard of living	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]

42. How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following statements concerning the value of family life?

	Agree Strongly	Agree Somewhat	Disagree Somewhat	Disagree Strongly	DK/NA
___ A family is a group in which people are accepted for who they are	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
___ Families can be too controlling over the lives of individual members	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
___ A family is a place where people can learn how to relate to the rest of society	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
___ A family is a place where most basic values are instilled	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]

	Agree Strongly	Agree Somewhat	Disagree Somewhat	Disagree Strongly	DK/NA
___ A family is any group of people who consider themselves a family unit	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
__ Most people spend too much time working and not enough time relaxing with their family.	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
__ Healthy and happy families help to make the world a better place in which to live.	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]

43. How far back, in terms of generations, does your knowledge or awareness of your family go? For example, do you know the names, occupations, or anything else definite about your: **[CHECK ONLY ONE]**

Grandparents [ ]

Greatgrandparents [ ]

Great-great-grandparents [ ]

More than four generations [ ]

DK/NA [ ]

44. From what country (ies) did most of your ancestors come from?

_____

45. How strongly do you identify with that background in terms of its beliefs and values?

Very strongly [ ]

Somewhat strongly [ ]

Not very strongly [ ]

Not at all [ ]

DK/NA [ ]

Part Three: Focus on Opinions and Values

46. Please tell me if you agree or disagree with the following statements. **[BEGIN AT CHECKED ITEM]**

	Agree Strongly	Agree Somewhat	Disagree Somewhat	Disagree Strongly	Don't Know
___ Marriage is unnecessary unless there are children	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
___ Having children is too limiting	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
___ Divorces are a reasonable way to deal with marital problems	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
___ Being single is not a fully acceptable lifestyle	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
___ Marriages with members of the same sex should be legalized	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
___ Abortions should be readily available and legal for all women	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
___ Because of overpopulation concerns, people should have small families	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
___ When medical technology allows, parents should be able to choose the sex of their child	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
___ The federal government should not help the children of disadvantaged families	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
___ More special communities and independent housing for the aged are needed	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
___ Instruction in how to prepare for marriage and parenthood should be taught in school	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
___ Grown children should live near their parents	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
___ The federal government should help finance long-term care of the elderly	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]

___ Grandparents should have an important role in raising their grandchildren	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]

47. Thinking of the next twenty years, how likely do you consider each of the following:

	Very Likely	Somewhat Likely	Not very Likely	Not at all Likely	Don't Know
___ Family units consisting of two parents and their children will increasingly grow in importance.	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
___ Family units consisting of single parents, unmarried couples, couples without children and couples of the same sex will become increasingly common.	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
___ More and more people will live alone or in non-family households such as with roommates.	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
___ Most married people will be divorced at least once	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
___ Family units of all kinds will become less and less important in our society.	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
___ Elderly family members will be more and more isolated from other family members	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
___ Ties among family members not living in the same household will become closer.	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
___ Members of different generations will find it harder and harder to relate or speak to each other.	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]

Demographics

48. Would you define yourself as: [Choose one]

Catholic [ ]
Protestant [ ]
Jewish [ ]
Other _____
Refused [ ]

49. Do you consider yourself a religious or spiritual person?

Yes	[ ]
No	[ ]
DK/NA	[ ]

50. Do you live in a house or apartment?

House	[ ]
Apartment	[ ]

51. Do you or your family own or rent your living space?

Rent	[ ]
Own	[ ]
Don't know/No answer	[ ]

52. What is the last grade of school you completed?

8th grade or less	[ ]
Some high school	[ ]
High school graduate	[ ]
Some college	[ ]
College graduate or higher degree	[ ]
Refused	[ ]

53. What is your ethnic or racial background? Are you:

Asian	[ ]
Black	[ ]
Hispanic	[ ]
White	[ ]
Other	[ ]
Refused	[ ]

54. How old are you?

18 to 24	[ ]
25 to 34	[ ]
35 to 49	[ ]
50 to 64	[ ]
65 and over	[ ]
Refused	[ ]

55. Are you currently:

Married	[ ]GO TO 56
Separated/Divorced	[ ]GO TO 56
Single	[ ]GO TO 59
Widowed	[ ]GO TO 56
Refused	[ ]GO TO 60

56. How long have you been or were you married?
[Do not read choices]

Less than a year	[ ]
1 to 5 years	[ ]
6 to 10 years	[ ]
11 to 15 years	[ ]
16 to 20 years	[ ]
21 to 30 years	[ ]
31 to 40 years	[ ]
41 to 50 years	[ ]
More than 50 years	[ ]
Refused	[ ]

57. How many times have you been married?

Once	[ ]
Twice	[ ]
Three or four times	[ ]
More than four times	[ ]
DK/NA	[ ]

58. Is your spouse:

Employed full-time	[ ]
Employed part-time	[ ]
In school	[ ]
Retired	[ ]
Unemployed	[ ]
Homemaker	[ ]
Refused	[ ]

59. [IF WIDOWED,DIVORCED OR SINGLE] Do you intend to remarry/marry?

Yes	[ ]
No	[ ]
DK/NA	[ ]

60. What best describes the population of your community?

Large city	[ ]
Suburb	[ ]
Small City	[ ]
Rural area	[ ]
Refused	[ ]

61. What was your total household income category before taxes for the past year?

$10,000 or less	[ ]
$15,000 or less	[ ]
$20,000 or less	[ ]
$30,000 or less	[ ]
$40,000 or less	[ ]
More than $40,000	[ ]
Refused	[ ]

62. Are you:

Employed full-time	[ ]
Employed part-time	[ ]
In school	[ ]
Retired	[ ]
Unemployed	[ ]
Homemaker	[ ]
Refused	[ ]

63. Would you describe yourself as politically:

Conservative	[ ]	Moderate	[ ]
Liberal	[ ]	None	[ ]
Refused	[ ]		

64. Would you describe yourself as:

Heterosexual	[ ]
Bi-sexual	[ ]
Homosexual	[ ]
Refused	[ ]

(RECORD INTERVIEWEE'S SEX---------DO NOT ASK)

Male [ ] Female [ ]

Area of the country (RECORD FROM LIST PROVIDED BY SUPERVISOR)

New England	[ ]	E South Central	[ ]
Mid Atlantic	[ ]	W South Central	[ ]
E North Central	[ ]	Mountain	[ ]
W North Central	[ ]	Pacific	[ ]
South Atlantic	[ ]		